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The Letters of
BAUDELAIRE

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BAUDELAIRE

Complete
POEMS AND PROSE
Translated by
ARTHUR SYMONS

The Letters of

BAUDELAIRE

Translated by
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NEW YORK
ALBERT & CHARLES BONI
1927

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PREFACE

Almost nothing is known of Baudelaire's childhood; yet, from the first, he is original; as, when he writes in his Confession: *"I had a curious sentiment of solitude, from my very youth, despite my family, and despite the fact that I was always alone, always myself, even in the company of boys of my own age. Yet even then I had a very vivid sense of life and of pleasure." In a letter written January 18th,* 1860, *Baudelaire gives one curious conjectures as to Meizon and to himself. The etcher had imagined that the Poet was living in L'Hôtel de Thebes, and asked him about Poe: Did he believe in his reality? Then he said that he had done a design of La Morgue (a stupendous one) and that he wondered if Poe had been aided by someone else in writing certain of his stories. "After he had left me," says Baudelaire, "I asked myself how it was that I who have always had, in my nerves and in my mind, all that is needed to become mad, have never become so. For this I thanked heaven." Five years after he wrote: "I imagine that in general an error causes me nervous crises, except when I have voluntarily cultivated stupidity as I have done during twenty years for the* century, *to extract from it its quintessence." As for "that fine madness in the brain," it is perhaps more often found in men of genius who are, on the whole, more abnormal than normal. In the very greatest there is generally found a kind of equilibrium between these qualities; as, for instance, in Shakespeare, in Leonardo da Vinci, in Meredith. Yet, even in these, much of their lives is conjectural; in this sense of exactly what tragedies in their existences set them to create some of their finest works:* Troilus and Cressida *of*

Shakespeare; in da Vinci (to quote Pater):—"Legions of grotesques sweep under her hand; for has not nature, too, her grotesques—the rent rock, the disturbing light of evening on lonely roads, the unveiled structure of man in the embryo or the skeleton?" As for Meredith, certainly Modern Love.

Baudelaire was more abnormal than normal; Verlaine, if anything, still more so. One finds in Baudelaire's notes: "My ancestors were madmen or maniacs, who lived in solemn apartments; all died victims of their various passions." In 1862 *he wrote in his Journal: "I have cultivated my hysteria with delight and horror. Now I have always a kind of frenzy, and to-day, January 23rd,* 1852, *I have undergone a singular warning. I have felt pass over me the wind of the Wing of Folly." Poe wrote: "I am constitutionally secretive—nervous in a very unusual degree. I become insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity." Pater wrote on the Greeks: "That to them, with impassioned madness, the madness to which some have declared great wit, all great gifts, to be always allied."*

I am uncertain when Baudelaire first began writing his Poèmes Nocturnes, Petits Poèmes en Prose. *He chose several titles, such as* Le Spleen de Paris, Lycanthropes. *In his dedication to Arséne Houssaye he confesses that the idea came to him in turning over the pages of* Gaspard de la Nuit, Petits Poèmes, *of Aloysius Bertrand, which tempted him to choose, not antiquity, but modern life. "Who of us," he says, "has not dreamed, in moments of ambition, of the miracle of a poetic prose, musical without rhythm and without rhymes, subtle and staccato enough to follow the lyric motions of the soul, the wavering outlines of meditation, the sudden starts of the conscience?" And he achieved—as in his own words,* bagatelles laborieuses, *astonishing trifles, with a perfect art, a revelation of what such an unusual form could express in words chosen as carefully as in his verse; and, what such prose as this is capable of, with an undeniable sense of rhythm.*

He confesses more of himself in these than in his verse, he speaks of his need of bizarre excitement which requires for its fruition that magic world of shadows and of realities which is Paris: its crowds, its music, even its street-lamps. And all Paris is there, and himself, and his visions, laughter, cynicism, invention of incredible and fabulous sensations, adventures of the soul and of the senses. His vision rises to the clouds; his creed, final to him and to others, of being always drunken, in which he leaves every one the choice, has that ecstasy which is a kind of revel of an external intoxication. And his cry, which was Edgar Poe's, is heightened into something of an agony: the desire of escape.

In Mademoiselle Bistouri *there is more than an analysis, written by one who loved, passionately, mystery; and in the strange dialogue in which the woman of the streets shows her particular passion, and refuses to say when it began, he brings in at the end that supplication which comes astonishingly into a story so banal and yet unsolved. I cannot resist from quoting that end. "Lord, my God! You, the Creator; you, the Master; you, who have made Law and Liberty; you, the one Sovereign who lets alone; you, the Judge who pardons; you who are full of motives and of causes, and who have perhaps put in my mind the taste of horror in order to convert my heart, as the healing at the end of a blade; Lord, have pity, have pity, on the madmen and the madwomen! O, Creator! can there exist monsters in the eyes of Him who alone knows why they exist, how they* have made themselves *and how they could not have done otherwise?"*

His nostalgia of the East comes into the prose, his morbid curiosity, his profound pity of the old mountebank; his Portraits de Maîtresses, *which has in it the tremendous and humorous style and subject of Petronius; the diabolical temptations of two superb Satans and one she-devil, which is simply filled with colours, perfumes, as in the Satan of ambiguous sex, the ancient Bacchus with his serpent girdle, his violin which spreads the contagion of his folly in the nights of Sabbats; the overwhelming chimera who gives him no*

respite in his irresistible indifference: all these, and all the rest, lead up to Une Morte Héroïque, *which, in its perfect achievement, in its breathless sense of suspense, its sense of tragedy and comedy and that thrill at the end, seems to shiver over the terrors of the gulf; and has in it, I think, no resemblance in the world of literature, save with some sardonic and tragic story of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam.*

Beyond any writer pre-eminent for charm, Lamb has salt and sting: Baudelaire, in his prose and his verse, sting and salt, and there is hardly a known energy or grace of prose which he has not somewhere exemplified, and always with something final about it. What began in mischief and in art in many of Lamb's letters, and what begins in art and ends in mischief I find frequently in Baudelaire's. To understand not only Baudelaire, but what we can of him, we must read not only everything he has written but every document in Crépet's Œuvres Post-humes. *Baudelaire, apart from those letters he wrote to his mother, puts into his letters only what he cares to reveal of himself at any given moment: he has a different angle to distract the sight of every observer; and let no one think that he knows Baudelaire when he has read the letters of Poulet-Malassis, the friend and publisher to whom he showed his business side, or the letters to la Présidente, the touchstone of his* Spleen et Ideal, *his chief experiment in the higher sentiments. Writing to Flaubert, he sometimes lets out, through mere sensitiveness to an intelligence capable of understanding him, some little interesting secret. It is to some casual person that he speaks out more intimately than usual (and the occasion of his writing is some thrill of gratitude towards one who had at last done "a little justice" not to himself, but to Manet): "En bien! on m'accuse, moi, d'imiter Edgar Poe! Savez-vous pourquoi j'ai si patiemment traduit Poe? Parce qu'il me ressemblait. La première fois que j'ai ouvert un livre de lui, j'ai vu avec épouvante et ravissement non seulement des sujets rêvées par moi, mais des phrases, pensées par moi, et écrites par lui, vingt ans auparavant." In* 1846 *Baudelaire was thrilled when the name*

of Poe surged before him, and for four years he set himself to the arduous task of translating the prose of a man of genius, whose genius he was the first to discover in France. And his translations are so wonderful that they are far and away finer than the originals. His first translation was printed in La Liberté de Pensée, *on July 14th,* 1848, *and he only finished them at the end of* 16 *years. One knows the fury with which he (in* 1855) *set himself the prodigious task of translating one of Poe's stories every day; which to one's amazement, he actually did. He rages over his proofs, over those printer's devils, an accursed race. One day Asselineau found him bending over a map and ventured to jest at him. "En bien?" me dit-il, en relevant la tête, "et les gens qui lisent en suivant sur la carte?" The rage in his eyes signified: "Vous ne comprenez donc que toute chose que j'écris doit etre irréparable, et que je ne dois pas plus donner la prose à la censure d'un matelot qu'à la critique d'un littérateur." Baudelaire, being lazy, worked slowly and unevenly, struggling with himself for hours over some word, stopping in the middle of a page "pour aller* cuire *sa pensée au four de la flânerie et de la conversation. Peut-etre supposait-il que le mécanisme cérébral peut quelque fois fonctionner utilement hors des concours de la volonté."*

I thought of Baudelaire when I was spending almost as much trouble on just as ardent a task as his when he translated Poe: I mean when I was translating Baudelaire's letters. I have said of Browning: "His secret was his own, and still, to many, remains so." Exactly the same thing could be said of Baudelaire. He lived and died, secret; and the man remains baffling, and will probably never be discovered: unless the publication of these letters were to reveal much more than those printed in 1908 *of what is most tragic and personal and agonising in his existence. Many of his letters to his mother are heart-breaking; as in his agonised attempt to be intelligible to her; his horror of her* curé; *his shame in pawning her Indian shawl; his ghastly confession that he has sent Jeanne only seven francs in three months; that he is as*

tired of Jeanne as of his own life: there is shown a tragic gift for self-observation and humble truthfulness. Think of the curé *burning the only copy of* Les Fleurs du Mal *that Baudelaire had left in "papier d'Hollande," and the mother acquiescing. She should have had a wiser* curé: *in any case, it would have taken a very profound experience of life to have been a good mother to Baudelaire.*

ARTHUR SYMONS.

The Letters of
BAUDELAIRE

I

LETTERS WRITTEN BY BAUDELAIRE BEFORE HIS VOYAGES TO L'ILE BOURBON. (1833—1841)

Lyons, 22nd November, 1833.

To Monsieur Baudelaire, Deputy Judge.

Many things to be said, but *primo* excuse me. A certain amount of pride was mingled with my laziness, and as you did not answer me, I thought it was a question of honour not to write to you twice running. Then I realised that was ridiculous; besides you are my elder, I respect you, you are my brother, I love you. I have much to say, I promise you now at the beginning of this letter, and I shall fulfil my promise. I have just sprained my ankle; therefore plaster upon plaster (or plaister), and I detest plasters as much as I detest doctors.

At Lyons they are building a *suspension bridge* across the Saône all of wire. Soon all the shops will be lit up with gas; they are digging in all the streets. The Rhône, that rapid river with sudden floods, has again overflowed its banks. And it rains in torrents here! The glass factory on the peninsula close to the city (where we students go walking) well, the Rhône is encroaching on the istmus (*sic*): it gnaws it away, it eats it up. At last, this very night, it finally carried away the istmus. That's always happening on the Rhône. An irregularity becomes a breaking down, and the tongue of the land becomes an island, for the river is very rapid.

My letter is swinishly scrawled, for my pen is bad, and

I don't bother to alter it, and I must hurry and excuse my laziness by writing a long letter. But think how awful it is, this trifling sprain hinders me from dancing, I, who cannot even forego one quadrille.

And then, during the holidays, well, I acted in a Comedy, and now I am going to act in a Morality.

Perhaps you will find my letter erratic; the thoughts are as irregular as the writing. Thank God our correspondence was interrupted for so long, that it has not been difficult to find matter for this epistolatory conversation. Besides it is much better to chatter charmingly than to write rot and *patos* (*sic*).

How is it possible! Théodore* has had a prize, and Charles none.

Ventre Saint-Gris! I shall have some. Tell Théodore that because of him I shall be crowned. An honourable mention for excellence (the fourth) and one for a theme (the fifth). Really it's pitiable. But I must be and I will. All the same, my compliments to Théodore; for myself, shame, shame. To think that he can mock me.

How is my sister? Has she recovered? Mamma sends her best love. I also embrace you. Speak to me, or rather write me all about everything and yourself.

Carlos.

Your number, the number of the street.

Tuesday, 16th July, 1839.

To his mother.

My dear mother, my good mamma, I do not know what to say to you, and yet I have all kinds of things to say. First, I feel a great longing to see you. How different it is to be with strangers—yet it is not really your caresses and your laughter that I miss, it is that something which makes one's mother seem always the best of women, for her qualities

* *Théodore Ducessois, brother of his sister-in-law, the future printer.*

suit one better than the qualities of other women: there is such a unison between a mother and son: they live so well side by side—so that, on my honour, since I have been with M. Lasègue, I have been ill at ease. I don't want you to think that it is my self-esteem which is hurt, owing to M. Lasègue's perpetual persecution, in which Madame Lasègue has also taken a small part. As for that, I thank him with all my heart; it is a proof of his kindness; it forms me and I am pleased: so it is not exactly that which upsets me. What I lack here is something to love: a spirit fashioned so that I can love it; like that of my mother or of my friend. Certainly M. Lasègue, and indeed his mother, have all the best qualities, wisdom, love, commonsense, well, all that reveals itself in forms I don't like. In all of it there are pettinesses which repel me somewhat; I wish they would reveal themselves capriciously and vividly, as in your house or my friend's. There is in this house a perpetual gaiety which wearies me.

Certainly they are happier than us. At home there were tears, complications because of my father, your attacks of nerves, well, I *love us better* so.

And when I feel in myself a something that uplifts me, how say it? a violent desire of embracing all things, a fear of not knowing how to acquire knowledge, terror of life, or even a lovely sunset outside the window, to whom shall I say it? "You are not there, nor even my bosom friend."

So what has happened? I am worse than I was in college. At college I took very little notice of the class, but anyhow I did something—when I was sent away, it shook me up, and when I was at home I was still able to work a little —now *nothing, nothing,* and it is not an agreeable laziness, nor even a poetical; no, it is a sullen and stupid laziness. I dared not say all that to my friend, nor did I dare reveal myself to him at my worst; for he would have found me too much changed—he has seen me splendid—at college where I worked sometimes, I read, I wept, I fell into furious rages:

but at least I lived—now not at all—I'm as down as one can be—defects in profusion and they are not pleasant defects. If at least this painful sight drove me to change violently—but no, of that spirit of activity which drove me sometimes towards good, sometimes towards evil, there remains nothing, nothing but laziness, ennui, sullenness.

I have displeased M. Lasègue—I have fallen a step in my own estimation—had I been alone, I might perhaps have busied myself in the wrong way, but I should have been occupied—with you, or with a bosom friend, I should have been honest—in strange surroundings I have been utterly changed, disorganised, set athwart. I seem, do I not, to use long words and complicated phrases to hide very ordinary defects. All this bother is made worse by having to take my degree. I am presumptuous enough to hope I can take it all together and get through the soonest possible. I am going to, and have already begun to do my utmost to revise everything in a fortnight, so as to be ready for the first days of August. For this I shall have to look up 24 questions every day. As to the competitive part, I shall only go as a substitute, that is to say, I shall be asked to take part if anyone is absent. All the same, I have been asked for my birth certificate in case it is needed.*

After all, perhaps it is as well that I have lived with strangers, I shall love my mother better. Maybe it was good to have been left bare and depoetised, I understand better what I lacked—it may be, as they say, a state of transition—all this time your letters have hurt me and made me even more uneasy than I was before. Nevertheless, always write, I love your letters. In my sad moods it makes me happy to feel my love for my dear mother grow in me; that is always so. In your next letter tell me at length about my father. Only do not say one word of this to M. Lasègue; he is so kind that it would afflict him.

* *In the examination of 1837 Baudelaire gained the second prize for Latin verse and a sixth place for Latin prose.*

12th August, 1839.

To M. Aupick.

I have just seen some good news, and have good news for you. I read this morning of your nomination in *Le Moniteur*, and I have had my degree since four o'clock yesterday. My examination proved rather mediocre, except my Latin and Greek which were very good, and that saved me.

I was very glad to hear of your appointment—from son to father these are not the commonplace felicitations you will receive. As for me, I am glad, because I saw enough of you to know how much you deserved it: I am behaving as if I were grown up and congratulating you as if I were your equal or your superior. Therefore, to say it simply, I want you to know that I am pleased.

I did not write to you for some days on account of my examination. First I put it back to August 20, then I was in a hurry to get it over, and I did: that is why I have been so much occupied these last days. Now what must I do? I am in great difficulty, I can do nothing nor can I change my lodging without your permission. And you never write to me. M. Charles Lasègue leaves here the day after to-morrow; with him absent and his parents almost always so, I am sure I shall be in the way if I stay on, and he gave me to understand that he dared not even demand it from his parents. He wants an answer from you as soon as possible. Should I return to the hotel and if I do, shall I continue to take my meals at the *pension?* * I have already paid for two months—June 5 to August 5. If I leave it I shall have more to pay. Anyhow do write to me. They ask for news of you, and I have none to give them. Do answer me; you promised me letter for letter, so you are my debtor.

I shall tell Madame Olivier of your appointment. Many kisses for my mother. Fanchette wants permission to buy an

* *Bailly.*

apron—for she has no more. Please mention it to my mother, and if it is possible send me her permission for the purchase. Goodbye.

Charles.

P.S.—How is your leg? Send me plenty of news for those who ask me for it. I have just seen in the porter's lodge a lot of cards that await your return, among others those of M. Lamartine, and of a gentleman who came to bid you farewell, and who leaves for Bourbonne. He was nice.

For mother.

Creil.

I have been here now for nine or ten days, my dear mother, and I begin to be heartily bored. I much regret that you thought my aversion to my brother's house so great; Fontainebleau is less provincial than Creil. I live here with retired tavern keepers, rich masons, and women who resemble portresses. All the same, I found in the colonel's circle a woman with white hands, and who does speak French. I creep in on her as often as I can, the rest of the time I spend in the fields, and sun myself in the open. Here everyone loves money, they quarrel over their gambling and are fearfully scandal-mongering.

There is a woman here whom I should love, she is so good to me: sometimes so much so as to be vapid. It is Madame Nemfray. It is she who before I arrive arranges my room, has curtains put up, supplies notepaper, a cloak, and has herself covered my screen. One day I said what a nice thing tea was, and the next day there was tea the whole day long in the house; another day I spoke of onion soup, and we had onion soup for dinner: and a bacon-omelette, and quickly we had a bacon-omelette for lunch. You see she is more searching and more motherly than a mother even; if you write to her, tell her how grateful I am to her. She told me you had been ill. I thought and hoped it was solely due to the fatigue and the

uproar I created when with you. It is true, dear mother, isn't it, that if only for love of your son, you will be well, you will eat well, rather than that your husband should reproach me for having made you ill? Persuade him if you can that I am not a wretch, but a good fellow.*

I embrace you and in my next letter I shall send you some flowers which you will find very strange.

Charles.

** The allusion is evidently to the severe altercation which took place between Baudelaire and Aupick in 1841, the result of which was that Charles was sent to Creil, to wait there for his embarkation to the Indies. He left Bordeaux at the end of May, 1841, at the age of twenty; he returned to France in February, 1843.*

II

LETTERS WRITTEN TO HIS MOTHER IN 1842, 1843, AND 1844.

1842.

I leave and I shall not reappear except in a more suitable situation in regard to money and mind. I leave for several reasons: firstly, I have fallen into a fearful languor and stupor, and I need much solitude in which to pull myself together and regain my strength. In the second place it is impossible for me to make myself such as your husband would have me: therefore, it would be robbing him to live longer with him; and then I do not think it is *decent* for me to be treated by him in the manner he seems from henceforth inclined to adopt. It is probable that I shall be obliged to live hard, but I shall be happier. To-day or to-morrow, I shall send you a letter which will tell you which of my effects I am most in need of, and the place to which they should be sent. My resolution is taken, finally and reasonably; so you must not complain, but understand.

*B. D.**

3rd March, 1843.

I send you my most sincere excuses for not having come to you. The month had 29 days, which confused my reckoning, and the letter only arrived the 29th.

Also I am busied in completely revising my article, and

* *Baudelaire, in youth, signed himself Charles Baudelaire du Fayis, Baudelaire du Fayis, Charles Defayis, Baudelaire Dufais, Pierre de Fayis.*

the distance is so great that once I go out, I haven't the courage to return, and so the day is lost: if I stay in, then I must work.

Besides—and this is a sentiment which will much displease you—I cannot describe the sad and violent effect that cold and empty house where I know no one but my mother, produces on me. I always enter it fearfully, and slip out furtively; and that I now find insupportable. Excuse me if you can, and leave me in my solitude, until some book of mine emerges from it.

C. B.

P.S.—Send me back all my papers.

16th November, 1843.

I had, two days ago, a long interview with the editor of the *Bulletin de l'Ami des Arts*. My story will be printed in the first number, that of January. From that moment I am definitely to be on the editorial staff, and I have promised several stories. Also, I have promised to get subscribers. It is in my interest for him to be under an obligation to me. Therefore I count on you to subscribe, and also to make some of your friends, such as Paul, Madame Edmond Blanc and others, subscribe. The subscription (now 20 francs) will be 36 francs from January, as the newspaper will appear every week. Another interest that I have in it, is that the Editor-in-chief of *Le Bulletin* is a friend of Janin, who will probably be appointed to reorganise the editorial side of *L'Artiste* which is to be sold this week; *the which editor* has formally promised to put me on the staff. I embrace you and rely on you; after having sent your subscription, and demanded the *numbers that have already appeared;* to send me as you can, the names of such as might subscribe to it, so that I can impress these people.

Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, 20, Galerie des Beaux-Arts. Publisher Guillemin.

C. Baudelaire.

1843. *This morning, half-past Eight.*

M. Ancelle yesterday gave me the Last Sacraments. Thus I have nothing more to do but return to my lonely self, and torture my brain.

Have the kindness to come and sit with me to-day after your lunch, if only for some few hours of conversation. I am too overwhelmed to be calm and I promise that I shall not inflict on you any violence of speech; do not fail me, I implore you; for I am in such a state that I know neither what I want nor what I shall do. I hope that your presence alone, even, if of no service to me, will restore me some small feeling of security.

Charles.

I had not realised that I must again have pained you yesterday, until after you had left me; you are so indulgent that you will probably have attributed it to that mental sickness which for some days has obsessed me.

1843.

To-night I had to leave my room and sleep—for two days doubtless—until matters are arranged for me, *in a hideous and unfindable little hotel,* because I was surrounded and spied on till I could not budge. I went away penniless for the simple reason that I had no money. In this letter I ask you for ten francs, so as to get through these two days to the 15th. I am still in bed, and wait with anxiety.

Your 60 francs have all the same proved fruitful, but I cannot get the money due to me (900 francs) till the end of the month.*

C. B.

**We do not know that Baudelaire published anything in 1843, it is the most mysterious year in his life. These 900 francs cannot have been due for articles, unless one were to admit that he was publishing anonymously.*

1843.

Do me the great favour, *I earnestly beg of you*, of sending me a little money, 30 if you can, less if you will, or still less even. I am in such a confusion of corrections, posters and galley-proofs, that it is impossible for me to move or go out in search of money.

For if I could, I should immediately have called on you. If I begin my letter with the *leading* question, it is because if it came at the end you would take the beginning for a trick.

Miserable, humiliated, sad as I am, broken in upon every day by a crowd of necessities, I think great indulgence should be shown me. I forgot, for living and all my troubles hinder me I think, from thinking of anything else, I forgot that you who were so kind as to pardon so many faults, were so profoundly afflicted. You cannot imagine what anguish and what shame I felt when I saw the pain I had given you, whose consequences I could not foresee. I wished to repair it, but how indeed can I do that now? Later, perhaps, and emerged from my first difficulty, my freer spirit may permit me to be for you what I ceaselessly long to be.

I embrace you tenderly, if you will permit it.

B. D.

1843.

The very moment when I meant to dress and call on you, I found the doors were double-locked. It appears that the doctor will not have me move from my room.

Thus, I cannot go to see you; and when I write to you, it is M. Ancelle who answers me, and who forbids me to call on you— In addition, I am locked in.

Do you then think my sufferings a jest? and have you courage enough to deprive me of your presence? I tell you I need you, that I must see you, speak with you. Do come now, *come immediately*—no prudishness. I am with a woman, and I am ill, and I cannot move.

You must at least, if you cannot do what I require of you, instruct me as to what is possible to be done. They keep me hidden away, I am locked in, you don't answer when I write to you, I am assured that I cannot see you, what does it all mean? I beg you, come to me immediately, immediately—no scenes.

Charles.

*Madame Duval, 6 rue de la Femme-sans-Tete.**

P.S.—I assure you that if you do not come, it can only create worse accidents.

I *insist* on your coming alone.

1843.

My dear little Mother,—I thank you for all your kindness and obligingness. Your tea will be drunk to thoughts of you. Do me the pleasure of reading this manuscript, now finished, apart from a few corrections. I got it back this morning from a *newspaper* (*La Démocratie*) which had refused it on account of its *immorality,* but what is very good is that it has astonished those who read it enough for them to have done me the honour of *demanding another from me at once,* with many compliments and amiabilities.

You don't know the end; read it and tell me sincerely *the effect it produces on you.*

C. B.

P.S.—If you are at home when this arrives, give the bearer *vingt sous.*

1844.

I want you to read this very attentively, because it is very serious, and because it is a supreme appeal to your good sense and to that deep tenderness which you say you have for me. I send you this letter, firstly, under the seal of secrecy, and beg you not to show it to anyone.

**I saw in Paris, in the Ile Saint-Louis, on the left side of the Rue le Regrattier, an old image under which was carved in stone,* Rue de la Femme sans Tête, *which is the exact street Baudelaire refers to.*

Secondly, I earnestly beg you not to see in it any intention of trying to be pathetic or of touching you otherwise than by argument. The strange way our discussions have of always turning into bitterness, though it corresponds with nothing real in me, my state of perpetual agitation, your determination not to listen to me, have obliged me to use the form of a letter by which to convince you how much you may be wrong, despite all your tenderness.

I write this with a tranquil mind, and when I think of the state of sickness I have been in during the last days, due to rage and astonishment, I ask myself how, and by what means, I can accept it once it has happened? You do not cease repeating, so as to make me swallow the pill, that there is nothing unnatural in all this, or in any wise humiliating. It may be so, and I believe it; but, truly, what does it matter what it is for most people if it is *quite another thing* for me. You say you look on my rage and my despair as passing things; you think you are only turning me into a mere child for my good. But be sure then of another thing, which you always seem to ignore: it is that, truly, to my sorrow, I am not made as other men. What you regard as a necessity and the misfortune of circumstances, I cannot, I cannot, support. The explanation of that is clear. You can, when we are alone, treat me in whatever fashion pleases you—but I repulse with fury whatever aims at my liberty. Is there not incredible cruelty in submitting me to the arbitration of certain men whom it bores, and who do not even know me? Between ourselves, who can boast of knowing me, knowing where I want to go, what I wish to do, and of what dose of patience I am capable? I believe sincerely that you are making a grave error. I say all this to you coldly, because I regard myself as condemned by you, and because I am sure you will not listen to me: but be certain of this from the first, it is you who voluntarily and knowingly cause me infinite pain and to an extent you cannot imagine.

You broke your word in two manners. When you kindly

lent me eight thousand francs it was agreed between us that after a certain length of time, you would have the right to take a certain amount of the money which I might make by my works. I made some further debts, and when I told you they were minute, you promised to wait a little longer. Indeed, certain small immediate advances added to the money I earned might rapidly have liquidated them. Now you take a furious decision; you have acted so quickly that even I no longer know what to do—except that I must renounce my plan. I had imagined that my first work, being almost a work of science, and falling under the notice of many persons, would have won compliments for you, and that you, seeing money come in, would not have refused some further advances, so that, at the end of some months, I could again have been completely disencumbered, that is to say, at the point I was at after your eight thousand francs. Not at all. You did not want to wait—not even fifteen days.

See now how wrong your reasoning is and how illogical your behaviour. You infinitely pain me, and you take a thoroughly offensive step, the very eve, maybe, of a beginning of success, the eve of the day I so often promised you. That is just the moment you seize to break my legs and arms —for, as I have told you, I will in no way accept the *"conseil"* * as something palliative and anodyne. I know already the effect produced, and on this subject you have committed an error even more serious—that is, to believe it might prove a stimulant. You can not possibly imagine what I experienced yesterday or the deep discouragement I felt when I saw how serious the affair was becoming—something like a mad desire to cast everything to the winds, to no longer do anything at all, not even call on M. Ed. Blanc for my letter, saying to myself, what is the use, when I have no more need of it—there is nothing left for me to do but find

* *"Conseil Judiciare." Evidently a proposal to put him under tutelage.*

pleasure in living like an idiot on what she pleases to give me.

This error of yours was so serious that M. Ancelle said to me at Neuilly: "I told your mother that if allowing you to squander everything meant you would work and establish yourself, I would advise her to let you do so; but that will never be." I do not believe it possible for anyone to have said anything more insolent or more stupid. I have never dared go as far as that and say calmly to myself, squander everything. I truly hope that you are not as indulgent as he, and, as for myself, I love my liberty too much to do anything so stupid. Therefore, though I know I am only your son, you should have respect enough for my person not to submit me to the arbitrage of strangers, when you know exactly how painful that must be to me. Think of the difficulties of what I have undertaken. Quite definitely, and I assure you, my dear mother, that it is not a threat to make you recoil, but the expression of what I feel—the result will be exactly contrary to what you expect—I mean, complete destruction.

Now I come to another point which for you will doubtless have more value than all my promises and all my hopes.

You are, as you said, moved in regard to me by a persistent and disquieting love. You want to preserve for me what I have, despite myself. I want that too. I have never meant to wholly devour my fortune—I am ready to give up to you all ways of preserving it for me. Except one however, that which you have chosen. What do the means matter to you so long as you arrive at your result? Why do you only wish to make use of that one which must cause me such terrible pain? That which is most odiously repulsive to my nature—arbitrators, judges, strangers—to what purpose?

Lately, not knowing anything of the Law, I spoke to you vaguely of a deed of gift arranged in such a sort that it would revert to me in case of death. I do not know if that is

possible; but surely you will not make me believe that in all the ruses of the solicitors' profession there is no means of satisfying you, but that one which you wish to employ. And why? Really—who could be more loyal and sincere than I am? Could I give a more definite proof of good faith and of the accord of my will with yours—I would rather have no fortune, and abandon myself entirely to you than submit to any kind of judgment—for one is still a free act, but the other aims to destroy my liberty.

To make an end, I ask you most humbly to spare yourself great anguish and me a fearful humiliation. But for heaven's sake no arbitrators nor strangers—no confidences—I desire everything to be held over until I have had a long conference with you and M. Ancelle. I shall see him tonight; I hope to bring him to you. But I am sure—utterly sure—that after a first success—it will be easy, provided you help me a little—*rapidly to* make a good position for myself.

I renew my entreaties with insistence—I am sure that you deceive yourself—but if not—if I have not sufficiently explained how much pleasanter and more reasonable it would be to arrange everything in a friendly fashion, do what you will, come what may.

M. Edmond Blanc has given me a very kind letter with which I shall clear up matters at the office of *La Revue* this morning. For the last time, remember clearly that I ask from you no other favour than that of a variation in ways and means.

Charles.

1844. *Sunday morning.*

Once more I implore you to weigh well your resolution before depriving me of my last resource, which is yourself.

Anyhow, I have been cruelly honest with myself, and ask myself what purpose I serve, apart from hurting you. How can I now have courage enough (even supposing I am saved)

to set out on the 14th, and how, and in what manner, will you receive me?

In my terror I shall perhaps go immediately, fearful of your refusal, to make one more effort, from which my entire nature shrinks. It will be fruitless. Anyhow, I beg you, tell me truly whether my letter really did not hurt you too much or prove too much a shock to your health.

Charles.

I open my letter to send you some good news, which, unfortunately, is not about myself. My brother is much better. I saw a long letter from him, the handwriting of which was not at all faltering.

III

LETTERS WRITTEN TO HIS MOTHER AFTER THE APPOINTMENT OF THE "CONSEIL JUDICIARE" *

(1845–1848.)

[1846.]

I thank you for the kind and sweet letter you left for me.

I would like you to come here *to-morrow morning*. I want to talk to you about *money*, but don't be afraid. Not that I want to borrow from you, but I want a particular arrangement easier to talk about than to write.

I find myself, by a series of efforts, lucky as well as unfortunate, about to make a good deal very quickly, but *in the toils of the debts you know of*, which every day become more frightful. I have five articles to write for *L'Esprit Public*—two for *L'Epoque*, two for *La Presse*—an article for *La Revue Nouvelle*. All that represents an immense sum. I have never before been dowered with such radiant hopes. But at the same time my *Salon* is on my hands, that is to say, a volume to finish in a week.

You see how occupied I am, and how much to be excused in not coming to explain all this myself; I am actually forced these days to entrust one of my friends with my errands.

Baudelaire Dufays.

You must absolutely get me out of an awful trap. I have

* *"Conseil Judiciare." A state of tutelage, appointed by the Court, at the instigation of the family, in which the affairs of an individual deemed to be incapable of managing his own affairs, are managed for him.*

been in jail since yesterday morning. I thought I should leave to-morrow—but there is a new judgment against me—and still another—a thing they treacherously declare to you only when you are in custody.

I must absolutely leave to-morrow, for I have an appointment in the country. Once free, I will get myself straight with the police. I have just sent the chief of the Staff a letter, in which I say that *important affairs, a signature, money, etc., call me imperatively to my solicitor's,* and that *I undertake to return myself* and undergo the rest of my punishment another day. That ought to prove effective, if you will yourself go and affirm the same lie by saying you absolutely must have me to-morrow.

Now I embrace you and wait for you. The Headquarters of the Police is at the Place Carrousel—the chief is M. Carbonnel.

Charles.

Saturday 4th December, 1847.

Despite the cruel letter by which you answered my last request, I thought I might once more address myself to you, not that I do not know perfectly well how much it will upset you, and what difficulty I shall have in making you understand the legitimacy of my demand; but because I feel in myself an absolute conviction that it can be so infinitely and definitely useful to me, that I hope to make you share in it. Note how I say *once more,* which in my sincerest thoughts means—the last time. No doubt I owe you thanks for the kindness you showed in seeing me provided with some of those objects which are indispensable to a more reasonable life than that which I have so long endured; namely, furniture. But the furniture once bought, I found I was almost penniless, and without any of those objects which are no less indispensable, such as a lamp, a filter, etc. Then, too, I had to put up with a long discussion from M. Ancelle, in order to get coals and wood out of him. If you only knew

the effort I had to make to take up my pen to write to you yet again, in despair of making you understand—you, whose existence is always so regular and easy—how I could find myself in such difficulty. Try and imagine this perpetual idleness which is brought about by my continual feeling of illness, coupled with a profound hatred of that idleness, and the absolute impossibility of escaping from it, due to the eternal lack of money. Feeling thus, I definitely prefer—however humiliating it may be—to address myself once again to you, rather than to such as are indifferent and in whom I could not find the same sympathy. Actually this is what has happened. Delighted with my rooms and furniture, but without money, I wandered about for two or three days trying to raise some, when last Monday night, worn out with fatigue and hunger, I went into the first hotel I came upon, and since then have had to remain there, *for the best of reasons*. I sent the address of the hotel to a friend, to whom I had lent money four years ago, at the time when I had it, but he has broken his word. Apart from that, I have not spent much, thirty or thirty-five francs, in a week; but that is by no means all the trouble. For I suppose that, if by a kindness unfortunately never quite adequate, you are kind enough to extricate me from this wretched act of foolishness, TO-MORROW what shall I do? For idleness devours me, eats me up, kills me. Really, I do not know how it is that I have force enough to dominate the disastrous effects of this idleness, and yet retain complete lucidity of spirit, and a perpetual hope of fortune, joy and peace. Now this is what I ask of you, *with clasped hands*, so much I feel that I am almost at the end, not only of others' patience, but also of my own. Send me, *even if it cost you a thousand agonies, even if you are unable to believe in any necessity for this last service, not only the sum in question, but enough for me to live on for three weeks or so.* You can arrange the matter as you like. I have such faith in the employment of my time, and the strength of my will, *that I know positively* that if I could

contrive to lead a regular life for a fortnight or three weeks, *my intelligence would be saved.* It is a last try, *it is a gamble.* Risk on the unknown, my dear mother, I beg you. The explanation of these last six years so strangely and disastrously spent—had I not enjoyed a health of mind and body which nothing could destroy—is quite simple and may thus be condensed: recklessness, the putting off till to-morrow the most ordinarily rational plans, consequently destitution, perpetual destitution. Do you want an example? I have had sometimes to stay in bed three days, either for want of clean linen, or want of wood. Frankly, laudanum and wine are the worst remedies against grief. They pass time, but do not repair life. And even to stupefy oneself money is needed. The last time you were kind enough to oblige me with fifteen francs I had not eaten for *two days*—forty-eight hours. I was always on the road to Neuilly, I dared not confess my fault to M. A., and I only kept awake and upright with the brandy I was given, I who hate spirits because they gripe my stomach. I hope confessions such as these—for you or for myself—will be forever unknown to the living or posterity! For I still believe posterity concerns me. No one would believe that a rational being, the son of such a good and loving mother, could fall into such straits. Therefore, this letter, addressed solely to you, the first person to whom I have made such a confession, must never leave your hands. You will find in your heart reasons enough for understanding that lamentations such as these could be addressed only to you and can never be divulged by you. For the rest, before I wrote to you, I took count of everything, *and resolved never again to see M. A.*—with whom I have already had two disagreeable interviews—if you commit the fault of considering this final attempt as vulgar and resembling others, and so showing this letter to him or even hinting at it. I have just read over these two pages, and they seem strange even to me. Never have I dared complain so bitterly. I hope you will be kind enough to attribute my excitement to the

sufferings you do not know of, which I endure, the absolute idleness of my apparent life, in contrast with the perpetual activity of my ideas, hurls me into incredible rages. I hate myself for my faults, and I hate you for not believing in the sincerity of my intentions. The fact is that for several months now I have been in an unnatural condition. But—to return to the principles of the theory I want to explain—my absurd existence can roughly be explained thus: an extravagant waste of money needed for work. Time flies, necessities stay with us. For *the last time,* wishing to make an end and believing in my will, I have written to you, as an experiment, a final casting of the stake, as I said before; does that seem exorbitant to you and will it complicate your affairs? *I divine* and I understand very well how every financial irregularity must be intolerable, and an occasion of trouble in the life of a woman with a household, above all to you who were so near to me; but I am in a quite exceptional state of mind; I wished once more to see if my mother's money would help me—and I believe that it will surely and certainly; I suffer too much not to want to end all this for *the last time.* These words have already, I believe, recurred several times.

And, indeed, despite the frightful wrench I shall feel in leaving Paris and saying farewell to so many fine dreams, I have made the extreme and sincere resolution of so doing, if I cannot manage to live laboriously for a time with the money I ask from you. I should go far away. People I knew in the Ile de France * have been kind enough to remember me; I should find an easy place suited to me, and a good salary for a country where one spends very little when one is settled; and the *boredom, the awful ennui and weakening of the intellect in those hot and blue climes.* I shall do that as the punishment and expiation of my pride, if I fail in my resolutions. Do not seek among official places what my employment will be; for it is almost domestic. It is a matter of teaching *everything,* except chemistry, mathematics and physics, to a

* *Island of Mauritius.*

friend's children. Let us not speak of that any more, for the possible necessity of carrying out my resolve makes me shudder. I only add that in case I should think it advisable *to punish myself for having failed in all my dreams.* I shall insist, since a sure and easy life awaits me there, that *all the debts I leave behind be paid.* The very thought of this decadence and abjuration of my strength makes me shudder. So I conjure you, do not show this letter to M. A., even confidentially, so shameful do I find it for a man to doubt of success. I have up to February in which to accept or refuse, and I aspire to give you on New Year's Day the proof that your money has been well employed.

Now this is my plan: it is excessively simple. About eight months ago I was asked to write two important articles which still drag; one, *une histoire de la caricature,* the other *une histoire de la sculpture.* That represents six hundred francs, which will provide merely for my urgent needs. But those are mere bagatelles.

In the new year I begin a new job—the creation of works of pure Imagination—the Novel. There is no point in my demonstrating here the gravity, the beauty and the infinite possibilities of that art. As we are concerned with material questions, it is enough for you to know that *good or bad, everything sells;* it is only a question of assiduity.

Now *I have calculated* that the excessive weariness of most of my creditors, who must think their chances deplorable, and further, their intimate consciousness of having for the most part *shamefully abused* me, will enable me to reduce the total amount of my debts to six or eight thousand francs at the outside. That sum is easy to find with enough care and persistence, credit the experience I have acquired in all this hurly-burly of newspapers and booksellers. Whom shall I employ in the difficult business of conferring with them, myself, M. A., or another? I still do not know. But I exact from you a promise that, this first act once accomplished, and some months having passed in which to prove that I know,

not only how to pay my debts, but also how not to incur others, you will aid me with your approval and your best efforts, to have the free disposal of my fortune returned to me. Then, too, you must return those cruel letters of which you have spoken, and towards which you feel so bitterly. But if you only knew the complication of great and small sufferings which compose my daily anguish. This time, at least, I have tried to write you a proper letter, as a testimony of the absolute lucidity of my mind when it is well; but the tragedy is that I need you, and that I cannot communicate with you in any way without some question of my interest seeming to enter into it.

I am very tired. I seem to have a wheel in my head. For the last time, my dear mother, I adjure you in the name of my salvation. It is the first time, I believe, that I have confided to you at such length these cherished and important plans which mean so much to me. If only that could convince you that I do sometimes wish to forego my pride where my mother is concerned.

Do not refer any more to my age. All education, you know, is not the same, and the question can be put thus. The longer the lapse of time between birth and the instant marked for success, the quicker must one go to profit by what remains.

Yet once more, I feel now so well, that it would really be most unfortunate if I had not made myself understood. Time flies, and a few more days of idleness might well destroy me. As I said to you, I have so abused my powers that I am now at the last limits of my own patience, and am incapable of a last great effort if I am not helped a little.

If by chance it occurred to you to ask M. A. for money, do not tell him why, and since it is to you that I am addressing myself, *at least let the pleasure of receiving this service come from you alone.* Answer at once; *for three days I have driven myself to write to you and have not dared.* You can trust the messenger. One word more. For a long time now you have tried to keep me altogether from your presence. Evidently

you hoped that such an exclusion would help me to solve my difficulties. Whatever other faults I may have committed, they are not a fault, and do you suppose my soul strong enough to endure perpetual solitude? *I promise that I will not call on you until I can bring you good news.* But then I demand to be able to see you, to be kindly received, and in such a way that your authority, your looks and your speech protect me against everybody while I am in your house.

Farewell. I am glad to have written to you.

Charles.

16*th December,* 1847.

You are doubtless in the midst of all the disturbance of a removal, which means that what I must ask you will no doubt cause you some inconvenience. I have much to tell you and explain to you. A letter costs me more trouble to write than a volume. On the other hand, I have a horror of everything in your house and most of all of your servants. I wanted to ask you to meet me to-day *at the Louvre, in the Museum, the Salon carrée,* at any hour you like to mention, but the soonest you can. In any case, the Museum does

[*During this period 1845–1847 only a few of Baudelaire's letters are known. There is one dated 30 June, 1845, in which he writes to someone unknown saying: "I mean to kill myself, because I am useless to others and dangerous to myself. I shall kill myself, because I believe that I am immortal and because I hope. Show him my fearful example and explain to him how disorder of the imagination and life may lead me to sombre despair and entire annihilation."*

The Salon of 1845 announced on its cover: "Sous presse du même auteur: 'De la peinture moderne. De la Caricature. David, Guérin et Girodet.'" *None of these were published, but* Le Présent *printed in 1857,* Quelques caricaturistes français and Quelques caricaturistes étrangers, *and the* Figaro, *in 1863,* Le Peintre de la vie moderne, *a wonderful study and revelation of the bizarre genius of Constantine Guys. Baudelaire defended passionately the cause of modernity in art. This analytical tendency might have turned him aside to a certain extent from retrospective studies.*]

not open before eleven. It is the best place in Paris for talking; it is heated, one can wait there without being bored, and, in addition, it is the most respectable rendezvous for a woman. Yet if that puts you out too much, suggest another plan. I was about to forget to tell you that as you have no card, you must mention your name to the porter and tell him that you have come to meet your son. I shall warn him. Send me an answer at once.

B. D.

I shall take care to be there first. I thank you for your last letter, it is so long since you wrote in that way. It is that letter which made me ask you to meet me.

2nd January, 1848.

My dear mother,—Pardon me for not having called on you at once as I promised. Be perfectly sure I forget nothing of what I promised you. If I do not call on you immediately, it is because I want so much to be able to assure you that my affairs are in a better way, and secondly, for a motive which will make you laugh, it will seem to you so puerile: it is that I am not well dressed enough to call on you. *In two or three days.*

B. D.

IV

LETTERS WRITTEN DURING THE PERIODS WHEN M. AUPICK WAS AMBASSADOR AT CONSTANTINOPLE AND MADRID AND DURING HIS RESIDENCE IN THE HOTEL DU DANUBE, RUE RICHEPANSE

(1848–1852.)

Letters written during his Embassy to Constantinople in 1848 *and* 1849.

To M. Aupick.

Paris 8th December, 1848.

Yesterday, M. Ancelle told me that the expenses of my journey to the Indies made some time ago, had, without my knowledge, been paid by you, and that the money I thought I owed to his kindness I owed to you. M. Ancelle was wrong in keeping silence and in originally hiding from me your gift; for, firstly, I should never have blushed to receive money from you, and secondly, if he had said straight away: "I have received a sum of five hundred francs for you," instead of using it little by little in an expedition which brought me nothing, I should have been able, as a lump sum, to spend it more usefully by remaining in Paris.

I confess that what M. Ancelle confided to me in regard to the remittance, astonished me no less than his care in first hiding it. I was, I admit, very much astonished that you should have deigned, so far away, to think of me, and bother about my eternal money difficulties; above all, after the harsh manner in which you received me some days before your departure.

With that sheer obstinacy and violence, which is peculiar to you, you were unjust to me solely on account of a poor woman, *whom for a long time now I love only from a sense of duty*, that is all. It is strange that you who so often, so continually, spoke of spiritual feelings, of duty, should never have understood this singular liaison, in which I have nothing to gain, and in which expiation and the desire to repay devotion play the greater part. However numerous the infidelities of a woman may be, however harsh her character, when she has shown some spark of devotion and good will, it is enough for a man who is disinterested, and above all a poet, to believe himself bound to repay her. Pardon me for insisting so much on this point, but it was a real grief to me that you did not at once understand the simplicity of my request. If I have never since written to you on the subject, it is first, the fear of afflicting you without some previously satisfactory explanation, and in the second place, the necessity of adjourning projects which demand, for their accomplishment, fixity, and a calm situation very different from mine. Yet I return to that question and feel obliged to make you this explanation. To-day, at the age of twenty-eight years less four months, with an immense poetical ambition, and separated for ever from the *honourable world* by my tastes and my principles, what matters it if in building my literary dreams, I further accomplish a *duty*, or what I believe a duty, even to the great detriment of common ideas of honour, money, fortune? Please note that it is by no means your consent I implore, it is simply your admission that I may possibly be right; and in the second place, that the matter be left entirely to my own free will, so that if some event or thought which I cannot foresee come into conflict with it, I might be able to break with myself and destroy my projects.

Now I must summon up courage to tell you plainly that as I should never have thought myself of asking you for money,

since it was you who took the initiative, which showed me that you still thought of me, I dared to imagine you might again come to my aid. The New Year is at hand; it is the period when I must change my lodging. With what I have to receive from M. Ancelle and from other sources, if you could in the meantime add two hundred and fifty francs, or if that is quite impossible, authorise me to ascribe them to you, I should find myself rich enough to accomplish several projects which I have long had at heart, among others that of withdrawing my poor dear manuscripts, which are eternally in pawn: provided that they still exist!

That is the frightful thing I had to write you.

The twenty-three days that remain should be enough in which to answer me. I should be glad if you could be so kind as to send me a few lines, and not use M. Ancelle in transmitting to me either your decision, or the remarks you may perhaps wish to make.

But what I am most truly concerned about is to know if you had a good voyage, and if you are well where you are, and whether your health is better than it was here.

As for me, despite the fact that literature is less in favour than ever, I am always the same, that is to say, I am convinced that my debts will be paid, and that my Destiny will accomplish itself gloriously.

Another reason which would make me happy if you could satisfy my demand, is that I very much fear there may be an Insurrection, and nothing is more deplorable than to be without money at such a time.

Goodbye; I hope that my letter will not offend you. You are evidently abroad for some while. Changes of Government will no doubt not affect you. Perhaps in a year, if I am richer, I shall go to Constantinople; for my mad longing to travel recurs perpetually.

Charles.

To his mother.

Saturday 30th August, 1851.

Dear mother, this letter will, I am afraid, make you unhappy. I promised to write to you twice a month and I have been installed here for six weeks, and have not written. That is due to my vain desire to send you good news in my first letter. But there is nothing, nothing or too little to be anything. But as I mean to keep you informed of everything I do, I send you a little pamphlet for which I was very well paid and which you will read because it is mine, for it has no other value.

You thanked me, when you left, in a sweet letter, for the promises I had made you. And now I begin by failing to keep them. I *practically forbade* you, now that my position is settled with M. Ancelle, and the deficit verified, to send me money; but now it is I who to-day appeal to your eternal kindness. Only it is for a very little, and anyhow I must explain why. The two first months, July and August, I lived on the allowance, which I collected regularly at Neuilly, then I *paid* the inevitable deficit, that is to say, the obligations to unavoidable creditors (tailor, fifty francs; furniture, fifty francs) with what I gained. Not only that, but I paid some of my former debts. Up to that moment, I was most careful. But the day before yesterday I collected my month's allowance, and feeling certain of the immediate appearance of my work on *Caricature,* I boldly and at one swoop spent the two hundred francs in purchases; necessities, it is true, but which might have been put off to next month (the reason for all this is that I am making a change in the very house I live in, and that having taken an apartment looking on the back, with an extra room, I needed a desk, a small iron bed and some chairs). *Now,* owing to one of those accidents which occur perpetually, and which I ought to have foreseen, but did not, the work will not be printed and paid for before fifteen days, or even a month. At this moment I have only

twenty francs. I shall watch them with terror slowly take flight. In a month, maybe in a fortnight, I shall be rich, but from now to then? From now to then, disorder, therefore, *unproductiveness.* The same story for nine years, and now it begins again. Not only that, but besides the whole sum for my booklet, I received a little money as a loan from a publisher, which I promised to return him *the day after tomorrow.* I beg you not to scold me. For two days now I have pondered as to what to do, till I decided that the most reasonable thing was to confess my stupidity.

But how many days must elapse between my letter and your answer? *And you will be cross. And it will make things awkward for you.*

I am very anxious and very sad. It must be confessed, man is a most feeble creature, since habit plays so great a part in virtue. *I have had the most incredible difficulty in recommencing work.* And I ought really to cut out the RE, for I think I have never begun. How strange it is! I had, in my hands, a few days ago, some of the papers of the youthful Balzac. No one could imagine how awkward, silly and STUPID this man of genius was in his youth. And yet he succeeded in having, in *procuring for himself,* so to say, not only immensity of conception, but an immensity of spirit. But he ALWAYS worked! It is undoubtedly consoling to think that by work not only money is to be acquired, but incontestable talent also. Yet by thirty Balzac had already for many years acquired the habit of continual work and up to now I have nothing in common with him but debts and projects.

I am really most unhappy. You will read with pleasure, or rather with a mother's eye, the important work I shall send you *next month;* but after all it is a miserable affair. You will doubtless find some astonishing pages in it, but the rest is a mass of contradictions and asides; as for erudition, there is only its appearance. And after? What shall I have to show? A volume of poems? I know that a few years ago it would have made a man's reputation. It would have aroused

an uproar of all the Devils. But now, conditions, circumstances, all are changed, and if my book does fire at *long range,* what then? The drama, the novel, history even, maybe. But you do not know what such things as days of doubt are. It seems to me sometimes that I reason too much, and that I have read too much to be able to create anything honest or simple. I am too learned and not hard-working enough. After all, perhaps in a week, I shall be full of confidence and imagination again. I think, as I write this, that for nothing in the world would I confess all this to a friend.

But there is no going back. I must, during 1852, rise out of my incapacity, *and before the end of the year have paid off some of my debts and published my poems.* I shall finish by learning this phrase by heart.

In regard to Balzac, I was at the first performance of *Mercadet le faiseur.* The men who so tormented him when he was alive insult him after his death. If you read the French papers, you would have supposed that the play was something abominable. It is actually quite admirable. I shall send it you.

Answer me AT ONCE. *Be most careful your reply does not go astray.* Tell me how you wish me to write to you. Tell me also about your voyage, and MOST IMPORTANTLY about your health. Do not forget, as you always do, *to date* your letters. And finally, I must assure you of the deep joy that I still feel and which brings peace to my soul at having renewed that natural relation with my mother which should never have been interrupted. I embrace you.

Charles.

"To M. Charles Baudelaire (private and personal), 25, Rue du Marais-du-Temple. *Paris. France.*"

Franked, which I omit to do, and for good reason.

Next time I shall speak of J. Jacques, who wishes, by the way, to be remembered to you.

Thursday 9th December, 1851.

For several months now I have meant to write to you. I have tried several times already, and each time had to renounce the attempt. My incessant pangs and the solitude of my thoughts have made me hard and no doubt clumsy. I would have liked to be able to soften my style, but even if your pride finds it out of place, I hope your reason will understand the purity of my motive, and my merit in taking a step which formerly would have given me so much pleasure, but which in the situation you have created for me in relation to you, must irretrievably be the last.

That you have deprived me of your friendship, and of all the intercourse every man has a right to expect from his mother, is a matter for your conscience and perhaps also that of your husband. That is what I shall doubtless have to verify later.

But there is a certain delicacy of feeling which warns people they should not pretend to want to oblige those they insult, those at least who do them no harm. For it is an additional insult. You perceive that I refer to some money received by M. Ancelle. What? He receives money, and no letter for me, no one word that prescribes or advises how I am to employ it. But consider how you have lost all right to *philanthropy* in regard to me, for I can no longer speak of maternal sentiment. You prefer to show your human sentiments to any other rather than me. You are remorseful then. But I will not accept your repentance, if it does not assume another form and express itself more clearly, *if you do not immediately become again, and completely, a mother.* I shall be obliged to have served on M. Ancelle, by a bailiff, a formal refusal to accept any money which comes from you, and I shall take measures to have that refusal stringently observed.

There is no need to insist to you on the importance of this letter, or the importance of your reply, which must be sent

TO ME, TO ME, you understand? On that answer or your silence depends my future conduct in regard to you and also my conduct in regard to myself. I shall be thirty in just three months. That awakes a multitude of reflections easy for you to divine. Thus *morally*, part of my future life lies in your hands. I hope you will write as I desire.

If you deign to understand the importance of this letter, you will doubtless add to your reply exact information as to your health.

Since you have so great an influence over M. Ancelle, you should, when you write, tell him to make my life less difficult and more supportable than it is.

I desire, *I insist*, that he take no part in the question which I discuss with you to-day. I shall accept no answer from his mouth.

Charles Baudelaire.

Saturday 27th March, 1852.
Two o'clock in the afternoon.

It is two o'clock; if I want my letter to leave to-day I have only two hours and a half in which to write it, and there are many things to say to you. I write from a café opposite the main post-office, in the midst of noise, billiards and backgammon, so as to have more place and to help my thoughts. You will understand how in a moment.

How is it possible that in nine months I could not find a day in which to write to my mother, even to thank her? It really is extraordinary. And every day to think of doing so, and every day to say to myself: I shall write. And all these days glide by in hosts of sterile pursuits, or in the confection of wretched articles patched hastily together to make a little money. This letter will in some things doubtless please you, for they prove that if I still suffer a good deal from certain defects, my mind, instead of stultifying, grows greater; but you will also find other things to afflict you. But have you not encouraged me to say everything, and, indeed *to*

whom could I complain? There are days when solitude tortures me.

This letter will be very disordered. That is the inevitable consequence of the mental state in which I exist, and of the little time at my disposal. I shall cut it up, so to speak, into headings, in proportion as I recall some of the most important things I want to say, things I have brooded over for I know not how long.

I add to this letter certain articles of mine, cut with the scissors from a newspaper, so as not to overweigh the letter. Nor will your reading of them when you have the time displease me. I fear you will not completely understand them; I am not being impertinent, but they are very *specially Parisian,* and I doubt if they could be understood outside the *circles* for which and on which they were written. *Les drames et les romans honnêtes,* marked with the pencil: 0.2.3.4.5.6. *L'école paienne:* 6 (*Sic*) *Les deux crépuscules:* 7.8.

I have done something else which will please you more and which pleased me, too. As I cannot put volumes into a letter, you must be so kind as to buy or borrow—I don't know which—in the shop of M. Monnier (reading-room or bookshop?) who, at Madrid, is the correspondent of the *Revue de Paris,* the number which appeared in Paris on March 1, and that which will appear in Paris on March 31, and should probably get to Madrid the 5th or 6th of April. I have discovered an American writer who evoked an unbelievable sympathy in me, and I have written two articles on his life and work. I wrote them with passion: but you will detect some lines which betray a very extraordinary over-excitement. That is a result of the tragic and mad life I lead; also I wrote them at night; sometimes working from *ten o'clock to ten o'clock.* I have to work at night in order to have quiet, and to avoid the insupportable fussing of the woman I live with. Sometimes I leave home, so as to be able

to write, and go to the library or a reading-room or wine-shop or café, as to-day. The result of all this is a state of perpetual anger. Certainly that is not the way to produce important works. I had forgotten a good deal of my English, which makes the translation still more difficult. But *now I know it very well.* Anyhow, I think I have brought it *safely into port.*

Do not decide to indulge in the maternal pleasure of reading all I have written before replying. *Answer at once,* if only three lines; and put off to the morrow or the day after the advice or reflections my letter may suggest to you.

This letter leaves to-night on the 27th.
28th.
The 29th it will be at Bayonne.

I assume it will reach Madrid the 1st, which is unbelievable, and that you will reply on the 2nd. I might have your answer the 7th.

I understood nothing of what you said in one of your letters about the *post. Four* poor letters and three tattered volumes of Racine are all the treasures I keep of you, who so often sacrificed yourself, and whom nothing could disgust with your son. Anyhow, I went to the post office and was told that the Diplomatic bag only arrived the 10th. It is impossible, therefore, for me to make use of it, or you either; *so you must send your reply to Madame Olivier—I shall pay the postage*—and not to M. Ancelle; he is capable of not informing me for a couple of days—even more. I do not ask you to send your letters to *my house. Besides the fact that Jeanne knows your handwriting*—I have not a drawer that I can lock. Can I ever know what wind will blow on my Spirit, or where I shall sleep? Sometimes I have fled from my home for a fortnight so as to refresh my soul a little. At the post office they could not exactly inform me about the rapidity or slowness of the mails from Bayonne to Madrid. I was told that I could not pay postage on my letter, and,

at the same time, that the Embassy had the right to refuse it if it were unfranked; it is too complicated for me. So, to make quite sure that my letter reaches you, I shall write on the envelope *private and personal* and my cipher C.B. If M. Aupick guesses, he cannot take it for an impertinence. I return to myself. I shall explain myself very rapidly, but in such a way that the few words shall contain for you who know me, very many ideas.

Jeanne has become an obstacle not only to my happiness—that would be little enough, since I too can sacrifice my pleasures as I have proved—but also to the perfecting of my mind. These past nine months have proved a decisive experience for me. Never can those great obligations which I have to meet, the payment of my debts, the *recovery* of my fortune into my own hands, celebrity, the alleviation of the unhappiness I have caused you, be accomplished under such conditions. *In the past she had some qualities,* but she has *lost* them; and I, I see more clearly. To LIVE WITH A BEING who has no gratitude for your efforts, who thwarts them with permanent malice and stupidity, who considers you her servant, and her property, with whom it is impossible to exchange the least conversation on politics or on literature, a creature who *will not learn anything,* though you yourself have offered to give her lessons, a creature who DOES NOT RESPECT ME, who is not even interested in what I do, who would fling my manuscripts into the fire if it would bring more money than letting them be published, who turned out the cat, my only pleasure in the house, and who brings in dogs *because* the very sight of them makes me ill, who is unable or will not comprehend that *to be avaricious for* ONE *month merely,* would, thanks to that short calm, permit me to finish my large book. I ask you, can such a state of things be? There are tears of shame and rage in my eyes as I write these lines, and truly I am glad there are no weapons here; I think of the times when it is impossible to remain calm, and of that awful night when I cut open her head with a bracket.

That is what I find where ten months ago I imagined I had found rest and solace. To sum all my thoughts in one, and to give you some idea of the nature of my thoughts, I think *absolutely finally* that only the woman who has suffered and conceived a child can be man's equal. To conceive is the only thing which gives a female moral intelligence. As for those young women of no position and with no children, theirs is but coquetry, unyielding and crapulous elegance. All the same, I must make up my mind. For four months I have thought it. But what can I do? A terrible vanity adds to my sufferings; that of not leaving the woman without giving her a certain amount of money. But where can I get it, when the money I gained, and which I should have saved, disappears day by day, and when my mother to whom I dared not write since I had no good news for her is unable to offer me so large a sum, not having it herself. You see how well I reason. Yet I must get away. *I must leave* FOR EVER.

This is then what I have resolved. I shall begin at the beginning; that is to say, by going away. Since I cannot offer her a large sum, I shall continue to give her small sums of money, which will be easy, since I *gain it easily enough,* and by working hard I can gain still more. BUT I SHALL NEVER AGAIN SEE HER. Let her do what she likes. Go to Hell, if she wants to. I have used up ten years of my life in this struggle. All my youthful illusions have vanished. There only remains what may prove an eternal bitterness.

And what will become of me? I do not want to take on a small apartment, since it would run too many risks, even though I have changed so much. Furnished lodgings horrify me. But while waiting for something better, I have decided to take refuge with a doctor friend, who offers me for 150 francs, instead of the 240 he usually asks, a large room, a lovely garden, an excellent table and a cold bath and two

showers daily. It is a German treatment, very much suited to my present inflamed condition.

I mean therefore to take advantage of quarter day, and moving day on the 7th—*our apartment is already let to our successors*—to escape. But I have not a penny. *I have several articles which will be printed next month, but only after the 8th.* Now you see the tragedy? What can be done? I thought, M. Ancelle may not have received a penny from my mother. She too may have *absolutely nothing*, since in leaving Paris she assured me that her expenses would be much heavier than before. But at least she might be able to send me *a line* which would authorise M. Ancelle to advance me a sum of money sufficient to clear up in one day all this confusion of moving. Later she would repay it little by little, *if that is possible.* Except for the deficit which you knew of before you left, I have kept within *the exact and regular bounds* of my arrangement with M. Ancelle. There, my dear mother, is what I have *dared* demand of you in this MOST DECISIVE moment. *We are two quarters in arrear, and all the accounts I am obliged to settle before I leave this quarter, butcher, wine, grocery, etc.*, say, 400 francs. Now I must arrive at my doctor's with 150 francs with which to pay my first month in advance. Then I want to buy a few *books*—for to be deprived of them is unendurable—and some clothes. Despite my sufferings I cannot help laughing at the sermon you preached in your last letter on the correlation of human dignity with costume, the one garment you bought me nine months ago still covering the animal who writes to you. Finally, I would like to be able to appease *a very old creditor* who might make a *good deal of trouble* for me. All that, I know, comes to a lot, but remember, my dear mother, that *no matter how little* is by far most important. If need be, I will do what I have so often done, *do without what is not immediately indispensable.*

It is now twenty past four. I am in great haste. I shall

call on Madame Olivier the 7th of April. I beg you, I pray you, do not confide in M. Ancelle the object of this money. *I confide in him only what I choose,* but you turn M. Ancelle into something fraternal or paternal, and I do not like that at all. This letter is, I hope, serious enough to give you some assurance of the manner in which I shall use this money. If need be, a THOUSAND francs would be enough. But I could manage with 400 only. Only in that case there would not even be five francs over for my personal requirements, and I should have to wait for my little April earnings to make my purchases and pay at the doctor's.

I shall write again to-morrow, for I have ideas enough to fill twenty pages in my head. But don't wait for my second letter before replying, and even put off, if you must write them, the ideas and advice which will occur to you; think first of the letter I must show M. Ancelle. To-morrow or the day after I shall try to write of things more amusing and reassuring. One word more; M. Ancelle spoke to me of your *butterflies;* the good fellow did not understand what that meant. But I did. Be careful of your eyes, consult an oculist, several. Think that some day I may live with you, and that the presence of a blind mother, by increasing my obligations, though that does not matter, would be a daily torture to me.

As for political events and their overwhelming influence on me, I shall refer to them another time.

I ask you again to send to the library for my two fragments on Edgar Allan-Poe.

Charles.

V

LETTERS WRITTEN FROM THE DATE OF THE APPOINTMENT OF M. AUPICK TO A SEAT IN THE SENATE UP TO THE TIME OF HIS DEATH.

(1853–1857.)

Saturday 26th March, 1853.

I know that I am about to give you deep pain; it is impossible for the wretched state of my mind not to transpire in my letter, not to mention the confessions I must make. But it is impossible for me to do otherwise. Despite the multiplicity of letters I have sent you, *in imagination;* for a year, I have thought every month that I was about to write to you; my letter will be short. I am in the midst of such difficulties and complications that I have hardly an hour to give to this letter, which should have been a pleasure, but is just the contrary. For I know not how long, I have so confused my life, that I do not even know how to find leisure for my work.

I begin with what is hardest and most painful. I write by my last two logs and with frozen fingers. I am about to be prosecuted for a payment I should have made yesterday. I shall be prosecuted for another at the end of the month. This year, from last April to now, has proved a real disaster, despite the fact that I had in my hands all the means for making it quite otherwise. I have the most immense confidence in you; the marvellous kindness you showed me when you were in Paris permits me to tell you everything. I hope you will not think I am completely mad, since I am aware of my madness. Anyhow, why pretend and concoct a letter

full of joy and lying confidence when my spirit is so charged with anguish that I can hardly sleep, and then often with unbearable dreams and fever? Why did I not write sooner, you ask?

But you, you do not know how ashamed I feel—and besides, what hindered me was the promise I had made myself never to write to you unless I could send you good news. And also my vow never to ask you for money—to-day, that is impossible.

After your money reached me *a year ago*, and though, due to an innocent mistake on my part, I got more than you meant me to have, I applied it immediately in the manner I told you of. I paid up the deficit for the year and I lived alone.

There began again my misfortune. I lived in a house* in which the landlady caused me so much suffering by her wiles, her noise and her deception, and where I was so uncomfortable, that I left, as I always do, without saying a word. *I owed her nothing.* But I was stupid enough to allow the lease to run on, even though I did not live there. Later, I learnt that the ignoble creature had had the audacity to write to you. Unfortunately, I had left with her—imagining I could send for them—*all my books, all my manuscripts, some finished, some just begun, portfolios filled with papers,* LETTERS, DRAWINGS, *in fact* ALL, *all that is most precious to me, my papers.* Meantime, a rich and friendly publisher took a fancy to me and asked me for a book—and part of the MSS. I needed was *there.* I tried to begin again, I rebought some books; and persisted in my determination not to write to you. The 10th of January my contract called for the book. I received the money, but sent the printers a MS. so formless, that after the first signatures were set up, I realised that the needed *corrections and revisions* would be so considerable that it would be simpler to unlock the *forms* and *set the book afresh.* All these terms are unknown to you;

* *Rue du Marais-du-Temple.*

they mean that the pages set up by the printers were almost worthless through my fault and that my honour obliges me to make good the damage. The printer, not receiving his corrected proofs, grew angry; the publisher thought I was mad and was furious—he who had so clearly said to me: *"Don't bother about anything; you have been looking for a publisher for years; I shall manage your affairs, and print everything you send me.* Poor fellow, I caused him to lose the winter sales and for three months I have not dared write to, or see, him. The book remains on my table, *interrupted.* I have paid half of the cost of printing. An agreement will shortly, I do not doubt, take place between France and the United States, by which the publication of this book will become impossible without further expense. Truly, I am completely bewildered. That book was to have been for me the beginning of a new life. It was to have been followed by the publication of my poems, by a reprint of my *Salons,* added to the *Caricaturistes,* which is still with that abominable creature I told you of, and on which I have had more than two hundred francs from *La Revue de Paris,* so that I cannot get another penny.

That man, who thought me *mad,* who cannot understand my delay, and whose good will was the beginning of my literary reputation, must now think me a *thief.* Can I ever make it up with him?

This is not all. The Opèra. The manager of the opera asks me for a libretto, which is to be something entirely new, to be set to music by a rising and fashionable musician. It is possible they may even have it done by Meyerbeer. That was a piece of good luck; it might even mean a steady income. There are men of fifty whose reputations are made who have never obtained such a favour. But poverty and my disorder create such debility, such melancholy in me, that I failed to keep even one appointment.

Luckily, I have not had a penny in advance.

That is not all. The partner of the manager of a theatre

on the Boulevards asks me for a play. It should have been read this month; *it is not done.* . . . Impressed by my connection with that person, the head of the hired applauders lent me 300 francs to stave off another disaster last month. If the Drama had been finished, that would have been all right. I should have had the debt paid by the manager's partner, or I should have set it off against the future profits of the piece, or the sale of tickets; but the play is not done; though fragments of it *are in the possession of the landlady in question.* Settling day falls due in six days, at the end of the month; what is to become of me? What will happen?

There are moments when I am obsessed by a longing to sleep eternally, yet now I cannot sleep at all, my mind is so busy.

Why should I add that I went through the winter fireless? It is too stupid.

So, to conclude, this year has clearly shown me that I really can make money, and with regularity and assiduity, a good deal even. But former disorders, a perpetual poverty, a new deficit to make good, the diminution of energy through small vexations, in short, my perpetual dreaming, has washed out everything.

I have something else to say to you; I know you are so good and understanding that I count it my duty to tell you everything, and all my torments are not yet enumerated.

A year ago I left Jeanne as I said I would, which you doubted, and so wounded me; why do you think I should need or desire to hide anything from you? For some time, I went to see her two or three times a month, to take her a little money. But now she is seriously ill and in the most complete poverty. I never speak of this to M. Ancelle; it would make the miserable creature too glad. It is obvious that a small part of what you send must go to her. I am sorry now that I said that, because you are capable, in your crudely maternal fashion, of sending her money, through M. Ancelle, without letting me know. That would be a great

nuisance. You do not, I know, wish to wound me again. But this idea will now increase and settle in my mind and obsess me. However, I will explain why I suffer in this way. She made me suffer intensely, did she not? How often? And recently—only a year ago—how bitterly did I not complain to you! But when I am face to face with such a ruin, one so deeply melancholy, my eyes fill with tears and in a word my heart is full of reproach for myself. Twice have I run through her jewels and her furniture. I have made her get into debt for me, I have made her sign bills, I have struck her, and, finally, instead of showing her how a man like myself should behave, I always set her an example of debauch and vagrancy. She suffers and is silent. Is not that matter enough for remorse? And am I not guilty, in this regard as in all?

And to your declining years, too, I owed the joy my talent might give you, but I have done nothing.

I am guilty towards myself; the disproportion between my will and my capacity I find impossible to understand. Why, knowing so clearly, so exactly, what is useful and where my duty lies, do I always go to the opposite extreme.

Did not that idiot Ancelle tell me lately that he had written to you saying I was very well. The imbecile sees nothing, understands nothing, in these matters, as in others. But I do not wish to worry you; there is nothing at all the matter. And besides, my health is so robust that nothing can dominate it. But my abominable existence and brandy, which I am going to stop, have impaired my stomach these last months, and besides, I have nervous crises, exactly like a woman. However, all that is inevitable.

Now do you understand why, in the midst of the frightful solitude which surrounds me, I so understood Poe's genius, and why I have written his ghastly life so well.

On this subject, I must tell you that this damned book, and the loss of my publisher's confidence, and the delays, the accidents I fear, such as that International treaty I spoke of before, and finally this affair, definite three months ago,

but every day becoming vaguer and more *unknown*—torment me for another reason; for I had thought with joy of preparing a strange surprise for you. I wished to send M. Aupick a finely printed copy on hand-made paper and handsomely bound. I know well that any exchange of affection is impossible between us; but he would have understood that the gift of a book, which in itself would be most rare, was a proof of my esteem and a proof that his esteem is important to me. You would have known of it and it would have pleased you, and that was my only object. On no account say a word about it.

I do not know if I ought to congratulate you in regard to his recent appointment—for I do not know whether you would have preferred to stay in Madrid.

Recently I sent to enquire from M. Ancelle and Madame Olivier and the Foreign Office as to the date of your return, fearing that my letter would not find you at *Madrid*. They could tell me nothing. I post it trusting entirely to luck. My letter leaves this evening, the 26th, if you answer with your usual promptitude I might have your letter on April 7, just *one day before* a new crisis. From now to then, how shall I exorcise the diabolical crises that await me; *I do not know*. I shall try to go on slowly, very slowly, with my book, like a man who is more or less penniless and does not know where he is.

I read, some days ago, an extract from a Spanish newspaper, in which it was said, that the poor of Madrid will regret you. I confess my first thought was an evil one; then I could not help laughing at thought of my thought. Finally, I understood that you would seek in every way to gain esteem for your husband, a very natural thing.

Write to me personally, M. Charles Baudelaire, 60, Rue Pigale (sic), and do not bother about the postage. I believe it is not possible to frank it.

I enclose some fragments of the poor interrupted book. One of the most remarkable was published in the *October*

number of La Revue de Paris; it is my translation. In the same number was a poem of mine, very dangerous and for which I was nearly prosecuted.* If you have not read these two things and if you have time, ask for them at the bookshop. Is it not a person named *Monier* at Madrid? It is called *The Pit and the Pendulum,* and is in the October number.

But I beg you *write to me before reading it all,* for anyhow you will receive it all later collected in volume form.

Poor dear mother, there is indeed very little space left for tenderness in this abominable letter. I can confess that ten times at least I thought of getting together money enough to rush to Madrid, just to hold your hand; but you will not believe that, will you? But I tell you that, plunged in the depths of my depression, I often converse with you in a low voice—but you will not believe that either. You will suppose them the polite fictions of filial love. And my soul is so strange that I hardly believe in it myself.

At any rate I shall see you soon; just as when one dresses up for a solemn occasion I will try to dress up my intelligence to receive you worthily. I have often asked people how you were in health, and they always said: *"Well!"* Is that true?

One word more. Send me the maximum of money, that is, as much as you can without depriving yourself, for, on the whole, it is right that I should suffer; and if you have no money, authorise me to get some from M. Ancelle, even if you have not sent him any since April.

Do not reproach me too much. When this fearful crisis is over, I shall rise again.

I embrace you and I clasp your hands.

Charles.

Monday 27th June, 1853.

I feel so sad this morning, so uneasy and so discontented,

* *Le Reniement de Saint Pierre.*

that I have not the courage to pay you a farewell visit. I assure you there is no other motive. You know how I sometimes have the most inexplicable caprices. Besides a visit to you always makes me wretched. I do not think you will leave to-morrow. Could you not send me (care of Madame Trolley, Rue Rameau, 13, for M. Baudelaire—she is M. Ancelle's sister) a letter to say where we could talk for an hour or two.

It would be very charming if this were dinner, lunch or a walk. But that form of luxury is not indispensable. I shall call on this lady to-day at five. As I do not know where to receive all the letters, papers, etc., which I might find useful, she has been kind enough to be my letter box.

Charles.

Your twenty-one francs made me laugh and have much touched me. It is true there are degrees of delicacy of which I would never think.

C. B.

Friday 1st July, 1853.

I rather vaguely expected some small surprise, but little did I think it would prove so magnificent. Frankly, I am most enchanted, and conceive that in two or three days, having all the means of retrieving a six months' laziness, I shall have no further excuse. As for the question of self-love, that does not arise.

There is no *amour-propre* possible in regard to those we love or who love us.

But you have been most generous; it is possible that I may accept only a part of what you offer me; for example, I shall only have the rent paid for three months.

The question of health, I know myself well enough, may resolve itself merely into a question of a few drugs and vapour baths. I have now only one disquiet, that is lest my creditors may have taken the liberty of rummaging among

my precious packets and my unlucky scribblings and even of destroying them.

On July 15 *I shall write to you at Barèges,* POSTE RESTANTE, and it is possible that before then I may have been able to re-establish my affairs a little. All the same, I must not create any illusions. I was splendidly off for the New Year, now it will need much care to put right what is spoilt. I HAVE FOUR VOLUMES OF FRAGMENTS TO PUBLISH, BUT HAVE ONLY AN AGREEMENT FOR ONE, OF WHICH I HAVE ALREADY SPENT THE MONEY. Shall I find a new publisher? Can I restore to the last one the confidence he has already lost? I shall only know in two months or so. In addition, I hope to write two plays, yet I am supposed to be incapable of conceiving a dramatic situation: What the result will be I do not know, but what is quite certain is that I will not trust to chance any more in my life, and that I mean my will to determine it completely.

I thank you with all my heart.

In three months.

Charles.

As for M. Aupick, I ask you not to *use any zeal and even to remain completely silent.*

Friday 18*th November,* 1853.

My dear mother, I had to bury someone yesterday. I gave all I had, but the cost came to 140 francs, of which I still owe 60 francs, which I promised to pay in two days, that is, this morning. You can depend on it, that before writing you, I thought of everyone else. Nothing in the world would induce me to call on M. Ancelle before the end of the month. I beg you not to send me phrases such as these: *To speak truly —Charles, you made me despair!* or *A careful man has always enough money by him to meet such things,* etc.

REFUSE ME SIMPLY, OR SEND THE MONEY.

I cannot return it to you before the end of the month, *but then without fail.*

Nor do I wish you to write me again mocking my intention to do so.

There was no need to read your long letter to know its content. Besides, I had already made the resolution you wish me to make.

As for my life, there is nothing new.

My fragments appeared in *Le Paris*.

The others will appear in *Le Moniteur*.

My verses, or at least some of them, will perhaps appear in Dumas' new paper.

It is understood between M. Ancelle and myself that for several months I shall only take a hundred francs a month.

Do not call on me, I am too sad, too embarrassed, and too ill-humoured. Perhaps next month I may see this darkness lighten a little.

Charles.

Monday 6th December, 1853.

Indeed, my dear mother, I am most unhappy to have hurt you. How can you take my brutality of expression so to heart? Can you forget that it is impossible for me not to realise how precious you are as a mother? I have only learned to know you since my mind grew stronger, I mean in the last few years. But my character has at the same time grown sharper, too, and that is what sometimes sharpens my tongue.

Now, I must thank you, and, at the same time, must tell you that you are much complicating the situation by not stating a definite figure to M. Ancelle. I am convinced that you have assumed my wretched story to be an invention, a pretext—maybe an exaggeration. Nevertheless, I took great care to tell you that the matter of a plot * must come before the satisfaction of my most urgent needs. You should send a line to M. Ancelle through the post. In writing to him tomorrow morning, for I cannot and will not go there myself,

** It was a question of the plot of ground destined for the female friend whose death he wrote about in the preceding letter.*

I can tell him that he will receive another letter from you during the day.

A thousand thanks all the same.

Charles.

Saturday 10th December, 1853.

If it is not quite *impossible,* give this man no matter what *—to buy some wood for me,* and do not pay the whole sum, as it will seem enormous to you, 40 francs; he keeps an eating-house and lives next door. At the moment, it will be enough to pay him a part. I shall pay the rest in three days. I know how much this will worry you, how I tire and bother you, so that it will seem quite natural to me, if you definitely refuse this demand. But, *in that case,* I beg you fervently to give him *no matter how little,* so that I do not have to write in bed with my fingers frozen, and can have enough to eat for two or three days.

I PERSIST IN BELIEVING that I shall return you some money this month. As I am now about to settle down to my book seriously,* and revise certain fragments, with your letter give the man the three articles enclosed. Further, I would like you to fix a day next week when you can come and see me, for it is long since I saw you. Have no fear, I am laying no snare for you, and there will be no question of money.

You know that for some time I have been careful to take only half my money from M. Ancelle.

I thank you with all my heart if you can do what I want, and I ask a thousand pardons for annoying you if it is not possible. You got the receipt by post, did you not?

Charles.

31st January, 1854.

For some days I have meant to send you a long letter, for I have many things to say; but each day brought with it so many journeys to make, cares and occupations, that I was always postponing it and must still do so. I have a piece

*Les Histoires Extraordinaires.

of good luck to announce, which may before long have very important results; I shall tell you about it. Yet I have so often missed the best possible chances that I must not be too certain of this one. Anyhow, I can tell you briefly what is in question; a great Drama in Five Acts for the Odéon, on poverty, drunkenness and crime. Truth to tell, I have not yet read my scenario to the management, but the principal actor has commanded me, as it were, to do it for him, and the fact is that I got round the construction of such an elaborate piece with an ease I never thought I possessed.* But I must have no illusions. First I must *write the Play*, then there is the *Manager*, and then the Censor, and then M——, who is a brute. Fortunately, the actor in question has a share of the profits; and besides, is on the best of terms with the authorities, at least I have guessed as much, and also he assured me that the work was very well constructed.

I ask you do not keep the man; you can write to me another day; anyhow, I shall write again to-morrow and send you the receipt; I am waiting for him to send him to a paper with an article; then I must go to Neuilly. Simply give the man 40 francs.

Till to-morrow, I embrace you.

Charles.

6th February, 1854.

My dear mother, without any discussion, I must at all costs have—at all costs—*you understand—at all costs—this very day*—the sum of *two hundred francs*. I have just asked M. Ancelle for them; *there was no question of your standing security, the money would have been repaid him by a newspaper at the end of the month*. He fears, he hesitates; yet, with a word from you, he would hesitate no longer. Therefore write me a letter for him quickly, quickly, and do not

* *In the letter to Tisserant, 28th January, 1854, the scenario of "The Drunkard" is given in detail.*

hesitate, nor write me any lamentations. I have been driving about for two days trying to raise this money, and I have not the receipt on me, which I should have sent you four days ago. *I repeat that the refunding of this money does not concern you.* M. Ancelle will receive the money in my place on March 5. But I want your approval, nothing more.

I write on his table, and shall immediately carry this letter to your district. If I have not the money, I simply cannot tell what will become of me; nothing will be left but to burn my books, do nothing at all, and shut my eyes to the consequences. I know that I am breaking your heart and terrifying you by writing this sort of letter; but in the state I am in it is impossible to send you an explanation, as I had intended some days ago. I await your answer in order to be able to return to Neuilly.

C. Baudelaire.

All the money I got at the beginning of the month was used to pay debts; I proved it to M. Ancelle.

23rd February, 1854.

My dear mother, do please have the extreme kindness to send to-day, or give this man, who belongs to the hotel,* the forty francs which have to pay my rent for March 8, which obviously you will not pay, or if it is too much give him a *louis.*† It is quite impossible for me to return penniless. Eight days ago I fled before the storm, and have taken refuge here (Hotel d'York, 61 Rue Sainte-Anne). It is utterly idiotic to be so cowardly; it only makes things worse. It will be quite easy for me to pay for my room next month out of the money I shall collect at Neuilly. I shall explain shortly what so often makes these complications as to my rent. Well for some months I no longer pay forty francs, but one hundred. I have another apartment in the house, which remains empty, but which I took in view of a sudden amelioration of

* *60 rue Pigalle.*
† *20 frances.*

my situation. Anyhow, I have given it up and am where I was.

I am never able to see you, I cannot call on you, and you *will not* come and see me. That is bad calculation, for you cannot imagine how much good I sometimes feel I should derive from seeing you. You do not believe it, you mock at a love you imagine feigned; come, be amiable, what prevents you from coming to see me to-day here, *rue Sainte-Anne, hotel d'York?* I must go to *Le Moniteur* this morning; but even if I have to wait some time, I shall most definitely be back by two. I beg you do it, as a favour. But truly I never do see you and you continue to impose that privation as a punishment.

Refuse the money, come and scold me, insult me even, but at least come; and do not refuse both things together.

Charles.

I hope this will find you, for I hear you are moving.

8th March, 1854.

My dear mother, the little book that you will find enclosed is, I must confess, no more than a very crude attempt at coaxing.* You will find, I feel sure, some marvellous things. Except in the *Poésies de Jeunesse* and in *Scenes from Politian,* at the end, where the book is mediocre, you will find it all strangeness and beauty. Although I do not actually need the book, since I have the contents in duplicate, do not lose it and above all do not LEND IT. It is a lovely edition, as you will see, and you know the trouble I have taken in collecting the various editions. What is most strange, and what is impossible for me not to perceive, is the profound resemblance, though not positively accentuated, between my own poems and those of this man—after allowance has been made for temperament and climate.

To-morrow morning I shall go to Neuilly to ask M. Ancelle for *the money due to me for April.* As I do not want to fight with him, nor enter into a discussion with his timidity

* *Poe's Poems.*

and his HONEST NAIL-PARING, and as your writing is all powerful, I hope to-night to find on returning (60, rue Pigalle, I had the courage to go back on Shrove Tuesday) I hope to find, as I say, a word from you addressed to him, inside an envelope addressed to me; it is possible that I may make no use of it; if he complies at once I shall only need your letter; but if he argues, what am I to do? When he is angry, his mania is always never to give me more than *a louis or two at a time, which is obviously of no use.* But I must absolutely, since my overcoat is in rags; it has held out two months and a half more than I expected; I must find some clothes to replace it with—*the shop is almost next door* —but I would not get *all I need*—what would be the good? Besides the fact that it would cost too much, I can ignore what is superfluous and so have more money; secondly, though my rent of a hundred francs is now reduced to forty, to-morrow I must make peace with my landlord. Finally, I must have some money over so that I can work for a few days; impossible to do it all under a hundred and fifty francs. The clothes will account for ninety-one francs—rent forty—I shall *only get half the necessary clothes.* You told me the other day that you dared not go into the state of my finances; here they are: since the beginning of the New Year I have had the whole of my allowance for the months of January, February and March. In addition, two hundred francs at the beginning of last month, which fall upon you, *if I do not pay them back out of the money for the wretched articles which still drag on, or if I do not diminish the frequency of my demands on Neuilly.* Also, I remember perfectly that you have begged me never to ask for money from you.

Since you receive *Le Moniteur,* you must have seen that it was impossible for me to hasten the publication of those wretched articles.* It is impossible for me to face the humili-

* *Les Adventures de Arthur Gordon Pym which appeared in* Le Moniteur *in 1857.*

ation of asking for payment in *advance,* above all before receiving proofs. I will try once again, but I imagine that I shall have again to address myself to *L'Illustration, La Revue de Paris* or *Le Pays.*

As for your visits, they make me the happiest man in the world. *Jeanne never comes to tell me of her troubles except late in the morning;* in the afternoon, whenever I have managed to save some money, and I shall doubtless have some to-morrow, I stay in. There are good reasons. I want this month to finish off all arrears, literary arrears, and most particularly the Play, which I wish to finish before the end of *the season at the Odéon and Tisserant's departure for the country.*

If by chance you are not dining at home, and if this letter, which I bring myself, to save the expense of a messenger, is given you too late for you to send to me *to-night,* send *early to-morrow morning.* I would like to go to Neuilly before M. Ancelle's lunch-time. It may be that all these precautions will not quench my thirst for borrowing money, and I shall go to *Le Moniteur;* but such an effort revolts me, and I should like not to do that for some days. You see, my dear mother, that there is absolutely nothing in this letter to distress you.

I embrace you and I want you never to DOUBT me.

Ch. Baudelaire.
60, *rue Pigalle.*

This evening or to-morrow. *Do not* LOSE *or lend the book.*

If you care to come and see me one of these days, and if an hour or two's talk proved disturbing, I could go on with my work even if you were there.

Thursday 18*th May,* 1854.

I am certain that to-day, Thursday, I can send you a messenger without causing you those nervous disturbances which so much upset you on Mondays.

If you are not at home the man will leave the letter.

If he finds you, let me know, if you can, if you will, if you would like to come and see me to-day. I shall only go out to collect some books I left in the offices of the *Siècle*, in Montmartre, which will take about three-quarters of an hour. If you come while I am absent you can await my return without impatience. You will find books on the table.

If you cannot come, tell me when you will; but in the former case send a little money. I know the man; I have confided money to him several times.

For some days now I have been installed in *The Hotel du Maroc, 35, rue de Seine. I am very comfortable; the charm of a damp ground floor, a court open to all noises, an inimical environment, incessant visits, and finally of idleness, is* BROKEN. I am no longer obliged to have money always in my pocket, and to go out twice a day for my meals. I made an arrangement here by which I cannot exceed 140 francs a month for the expense of food and lodging.

THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, 16th, I asked one of the owners of the *"Constitutionnel"* for 1,000 francs. He said that he had indeed promised me a heavy *advance* before publication, but as I had *myself confessed* that the work was not finished, and as the person who was arranging the terms of the sale, the quantity of copies sold, the price per line, etc., had not yet advised him, he was obliged to make me wait. There was no answer to that. I had merely to resign myself to continued work and to torment the individual who serves as intermediary.

I am most anxious to buy some linen, in which I am almost totally lacking, and to send some money to JEANNE, to whom I meant to send three hundred francs out of the thousand francs, and which I should have given her on the 16th. I presume you will bring me *the forty francs for next month*, the 9th of June. I shall keep twenty francs for myself, and I shall send her twenty francs, imploring her to try and hold on. I have forbidden her to come and see me here;

an odious sense of pride made me do so. I do not want them to see a woman who was once mine, beautiful, healthy and elegant, *in poverty, ill and badly dressed.*

In the event of the man not finding you, you might send me a word after dinner.

But all these notes and messengers are not really what I want. I would infinitely prefer seeing you.

There is now a possibility of my Play for the Theatre Porte Saint-Martin.*

Charles.

25th June, 1854.

My dear mother, I MUST, I *absolutely must,* dine a certain woman THIS EVENING as the cooking here is vile. The *poverty* of my landlord, *a poverty I was unaware of,* being insupportable, I must take her to a restaurant. Even were I to write to stop her coming—invent a lie, such as sickness, absence—I should be glad to be able to go out for a meal, for really, it is painful here. Once the hotel was well kept, now it is disgusting. You know that M. Ancelle is coming and that I *am going to have sent back to you what you sent me this month.*

(As a specimen of the disorder of this house, imagine, just now during dinner, there was no bread.)

And my affair? My affair, you ask! It has passed into a new phase. It is like the question of the East, finally arranged. But at what a price, great gods! I lose 1,300 francs. In other words, the necessity of appearing very promptly made me yield for 700 francs what is worth 2,000. I may sign my contract to-morrow with *Le Pays,* and then, like a madman, I shall rush off to borrow money on the security. The entire work will appear in a MONTH. Meanwhile you will see three large portions of it in *Le Constitutionnel.*

* *The Director was Marc Fournier whom he knew as a colleague, particularly on* Le Corsaire-Satan.

All this bad may prove a blessing, perhaps. I shall have to get busy with my *Scenarios,* on which I may be able to raise 1,000 or 2,000 francs.

I beg you, do not reply with a letter full of harshness.

Charles.

Friday 21st July, 1854.

Really you distress me by the strength of your imagination. You should see things without magnifying them. I only read your letter this morning. If I were to answer it, it would mean ten pages. M. Ancelle, whose incurable indolence makes me despair, Jeanne, a drama I must write, the work to which I am yoked, Arondel * whose insinuating voice says EVERY MORNING: "What, still asleep!"; this for two and a half months now—as if everybody did not know that I always go to bed in the morning—it all whirls in my head. A letter becomes a labour, and I do not feel I have the right to give up two hours to a letter. Many of your sick dreams are false. *Money, money,* that is the only part of your letter which relates to my own thoughts. The affair of the *Constitutionnel* is puerile; I have taken back my manuscript and will compensate them by an exchange advantageous to them. You seem not to read the papers, nor to have seen the definite announcement in *Le Pays,* which is the cause of this forced activity. Your suppositions and your *amour-propre* in regard to my landlord are misplaced. This house is the house of disorder and I am in haste to leave it; but the landlord, who is always asking me for money because he is always in need of it, keeps his place with the utmost respect; besides, I have given him two hundred and thirty-five francs.

* *Arondel was a picture dealer to whom Baudelaire signed bills of exchange soon after his installation in the Quai de Bethune, 1842, which sum, increased by interest, was even to the end of his life, a menace to his peace of mind.*

Therefore to spare me a long letter, come and see me, and without fear of the man; at once, if you can, and if you are at home pay the messenger. If you are not, come after dinner. I rarely go out except at nine to *Le Pays*, sometimes at eleven to *La Gaieté*. Try to bring me some money; I shall explain the reason why.

I no longer make plans, the mere exposition of which would please you, you said. I am engaged in their forced daily execution and am obliged on the sudden to work regularly.

My letter lengthens, but as I have said, I prefer to tell you personally what has happened since I last saw you, all my future hopes and all my present fears.

Charles.

28th July, 1854.

Arondel has just left. He really is a spectre; fortunately, I was hidden in my dressing-room. He waited some time, but M. Lepage had the presence of mind to tell him that someone had come for me to go to the printers. It is impossible for me to reply but briefly, to your long letter. Yes, yes, all will be arranged; yes, the reconciliation will take place and honourably, if only your husband will make the smallest effort; yes, I know all I have made you endure.

At the moment I am much alarmed. A crowd of good-for-nothings and scoundrels waste my days by their visits; I shall shut myself up hermetically. At night I go to the printers. I cannot afford to lose any more time, for the printing would overtake me, it goes so quickly. You must have guessed the absurd accident that happened to me. Those fools suddenly decided to begin publication on the 24th at four o'clock without letting me know. As a result, the country edition was a veritable arse-wiper, *a monster*. Even in the Paris edition, where the evil was remedied during the night, chance having led me to the printer, serious faults still remained, particularly in the dedication to Maria

Clemm, which I thought much of, thus: His glory will make fragrant your name.*

I shall try, within a couple of days, to write you a letter in duplicate—one for you, one for Ancelle; see that he does not lose his, for it may be useful to you in supplying the points in discussion, and will show you at the same time that *something must be done while awaiting the lucky chances of life.* I must absolutely, in the midst of this insupportable fatigue of translation, find time to do the scenario for my plays.

Ah, by the way! The forty francs? Is that possible to-day? They will go to the landlord, something on account. Would it be possible the 1st or 5th of August?

Within three days at latest the note in question.

Charles.

I shall not pay the messenger.

14th August, 1854.

How is it possible, after receiving such a letter at short range, to quietly write one's verses, articles on painting, plots of plays, or even translations? Your remarkable letter reached me yesterday morning, yet I preferred it to that cruel visit which always interrupts my sleep at eight o'clock.

**In this phrase* il embaumera LUI votre nom avec sa gloire, *the words* lui *and* sa *had been omitted. Maria Clem was the mother-in-law and adoptive mother of Poe. Towards him she showed a most constant devotion, even when a prey to his dark passion, even when, unfaithful to the memory of Virginia Clem, he was on the point of re-marrying. Baudelaire on every possible occasion pays her homage. And in such terms that it must have been difficult for Madame Aupick not to discern a certain envy. In a dedication found among the posthumous works he writes: "To-day it is not merely the pleasure of demonstrating these magnificent works which moves me, but also that of writing at their head the name of the woman who to him was ever kind and good. 'As your kindness tended his wounds, his glory will make fragrant your name.'".*

The interview between him and M. Ancelle was a difficult one and it is on *me that the consequences will fall.*

Send this letter at once (his) to M. Ancelle, whom I will go and see on my way back from Marly, before returning to Paris.

I have gone back to *La Revue de Paris.* So as to make surer of satisfying everybody at once, I mean to work every day both on the *thing* for *Le Pays* and on *that* for *La Revue de Paris.*

You misread me; I wrote that the publication which was interrupted will start again in fifteen or twenty days; *from the 5th of August,* thanks to the interruption, I can think a little of other matters.

As, last month, I only took eighty francs at Neuilly, this month I took 230, chiefly because of the interruption; from the newspaper I only got 240 on account; I paid a hundred francs here two days ago.

I have read attentively all that you wrote me of your worries and difficulties. All the same, I thought you might *without anger* send me to-day 20 francs, five of which I shall keep to go to Marly on a question of money; *but I assure you it is not for Arondel that I go to all this trouble.* As for the fifteen others, I can say to you what they are for; to a woman one can speak of women. There are souls, so fine in feeling, so in pain, so honest, that the least caress will enable them to bear everything with patience.

To-day is Maria's birthday.* The woman I speak of spends her nights watching over her dying parents, after having played her stupid five acts. I am not rich enough to give presents, but some flowers sent this evening would sufficiently express my sympathy. I no longer want your 40 francs—*they are useless to me.* I prefer to keep the right, in certain cases such as this, to apply to you, *on condition of never passing the bounds of discretion.* You see how busy I am. I am sure that this winter there will be a veritable ex-

* *Marie Daubrun was acting at the Gaieté.*

plosion of money, if I prepare everything in advance. Today is your accursed Monday. Forgive me.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

Tuesday 22nd August, 1854.

My dear little mother, give the messenger the twenty francs which make up the forty francs of my allowance. There is no need to say I shall not ask you for anything on the first. I no longer live here, nor spend any money here, which means I must always have money in my pocket. In any case, it is better so. Really, it is too long since I last saw you; one of these days I must arrange to meet you somewhere. As for my *Edgar Poe,* I think definitely that all the Frédèric Soulié will be printed before my own stuff, which will throw me back to the 15th of September, and will therefore also put back the six hundred or eight hundred francs of the balance to the 15th October. That makes things difficult, but nothing has been lost. The problem of knowing whether the first play is to be performed at the *Porte Saint-Martin,* with the Director's approval, will be solved at the beginning of September.

I am going back to *La Revue de Paris,* where they have nearly 500 francs for me. Altogether that is not much; and then *La Revue* will no longer pay in advance.

When I think of the uproar my repeated announcements cause me, I cannot help wondering at the devilish care with which men of imagination amuse themselves by multiplying their pains and difficulties. One of my chief preoccupations —and you will see what fearful jobs I take on myself—is to get back into the Theatre of the Porte Saint-Martin a woman who is hated by the manager's wife, and thereby displace a woman who already has the job.

This necessity of living out makes me waste much of my time, and often I work in a reading-room or café—for

despite everything, *I do work*. When shall I have a man servant and a cook—and a household?

Jean Jacques and Maxime Ducamp send you, through me, their very best wishes. J. J. is very strange; he no longer dares call on you.

Embrace me; that always does me good.

Charles.

Monday 4th December, 1856.

(*Letter written in pencil.*)

My dear mother, you will doubtless not have thought it very astonishing for me to refrain so long from thanking you for the timely help, most unexpected, which you brought me. You know my strange life, and how every day brings its quota of wrath, disputes, embarrassments, errands and work. So it is not very astonishing if sometimes for a fortnight or so I put off to to-morrow the letters which I consider duties. This day even I again come to you for aid. You see what need I must be in for, thanks to the extraordinary life that has been made for me, if to ask for my own MONEY hurts me as though I were *begging*, judge of the effect on me of the wretched necessity of imploring a service. Your poor 100 francs have touched me, helped me to live, and that is all; if I had applied them to any of the things which most preoccupy me, nothing would have remained. As it was, they paid the five or six small debts that always surround one where one lives. But what was most unpleasant was that looking at that wretched note which you believed so important a help, I thought what privation it meant to you.

To-day the same question arises for me, as for other months: *Yes or No*, can I clothe myself? I will not say; can I walk through the streets without being looked after? That's nothing; but must I resign myself to going to bed, and staying there, for lack of clothes to wear? Can I finally, when it is most indispensable for me to be calm and free?—for at any moment I may have to occupy myself solely with the

paper, and every morning I expect proofs—can I hope to obtain the repose that hangs on the payment of a few small debts? And then, Madame Trolley, who is a fool, like everyone in that world, chooses this very moment to demand very *shortly*, as you see, the money she lent me. This money was for a long time at Neuilly, at her disposition; but M. Ancelle, who will only do things his own way, thought he would make her wait so long that she finally got disgusted. And I, out of humour by all this, one fine morning, some time ago, took and spent that money.

I saw M. Ancelle two or three days ago; he was going to your house; I asked him earnestly to explain the matter and to insist on being allowed (*on his being allowed*) to do for me what he did last month; but I am sure he said nothing of the kind to you. I also spoke to him about the year's accounts, of the need of making a grand final account; of the insignificance of the sum, however considerable it might be, provided only that it did not increase in the new year; I reproached him with having frightened you, and finally I gave him my message to you. I also took from him a letter of credit on his tailor. Not being able to drag any money out of him, I wanted at least to guarantee a means by which I could dress myself in some manner or other. . . .

To what humiliations have you not subjected me, my god, and what kind of joy can one feel in torturing in so wretched a way a man like myself?

In any case, I have not yet made use of his letter; I would have liked not to use it; for really it is quite absurd always to buy new things when better can be procured for the same money. It is only a question of something down for my tailor and of releasing certain things already made.

Out of the sum I wanted from M. Ancelle, the same as other months (350 francs), I shall pay something on account to my landlady, and I shall profit by the occasion to tear, to *exact*, to *extort* the account I have so long asked for and a

receipt for all moneys paid. All the money I shall get from *Le Pays,* either on account this month or the final payment on New Year's Eve, will evidently go to her for she has asked me to leave on the 9th of January and I have sworn that from that date I shall never again get into the clutches of a hotel keeper.

I shall take up concubinage again and if on the 9th I am not living with Mlle. Lemer,* I shall be with *the other.* At all costs I must have a *family;* it is the only means of working and spending less.

M. Ancelle asserts he would be only too happy if I did not next year draw more than two thousand four hundred francs. You know my intention was to take only one thousand two hundred; but he does not believe it.

I have a thousand torments. I wait for *proofs* as if they were the *Messiah. Le Pays* has sent for me often. They fear lest, having begun, I might leave them without copy. How can they not suspect the punctuality of a man whose life is as deplorable as mine?

My friends give me to understand that if I do not make haste in regard to my play, to which they are well disposed, another of those accidents which too often have made me despair in the past might well happen to me now, leaving behind an eternal regret.

And then I am also behind, and for some time now, with *La Revue de Paris.*

My head is splitting.

I recall one thing that struck me in our last interview; I mean a certain disquiet relative to the steps you believed me capable of taking in regard to the Civil Tribunal. In effect, I am capable of so doing—but not sufficiently stupid to do so. . . .

* *To escape her creditors Jeanne Duval changed her name several times. She was called successively Jeanne Lemer and Jeanne Prosper. The other?—probably the mysterious J. G. F. to whom is dedicated the Paradis artificiels and Heautontimoroumenos.*

5th April, 1855.

I am obliged, my dear mother, to send you this letter unsealed, since you sent back some months ago two letters of apology unopened.

Some days ago I begged M. Ancelle, being really unable any longer to continue the wretched life I lead, to lend me a thousand francs with which to arrange a suitable habitation. After seeming to consent, he changed his mind. I therefore gave up the idea, thinking to pay part of the cost myself out of my book. This morning, however, I asked him to advance me the wretched sum of 350 francs, offering him the surest guarantees for repayment. I must obviously therefore install myself temporarily.

In A MONTH I have had to move six times, in misery, eaten by fleas, my most important letters refused, tossed from hotel to hotel. I came to a definite decision, and lived and worked at the printers, since I could not work at home. How I could go on with my book, how it is I am not ill, I cannot tell. But I cannot go on much longer, all the more as I must work more actively. It is impossible to imagine a worse series of misadventures. The publisher and I are both in a hurry. The job for *Le Pays* finishes in three days, and then I must begin elsewhere; and I have no home, for I cannot call an unfurnished hole where my books lie *on the floor* a home. On the other hand, even before I am definitely installed, I must have *comparative* ease and quiet; for my head cannot contain at one and the same time ignoble and vulgar complications and the constant preoccupation with a book that I want to be good. I asked *him* therefore for 350 francs (the fact is that, following his usual *petty* habit, he gave me 100 this morning, but that is no good at all). He might, if he wishes (but I doubt if he will) make use of one of those powers, have it registered and witnessed. It is really a bond. I should like him to choose *the most distant,* a bill on Dutacq, because I counted on using the *Revue de Paris* for my month's expenses.

As if that were not stupid enough, I MUST—surrounded by all these unbearable shocks that use me up—write poems; that most fatiguing of all occupations.

* * * *

I have just thought in the cab, firstly, that it is your Monday; all the same I beg you to think of my agitation and forego your scolding. You see how very serious it is.

In the second place, if necessary, absolutely necessary, I might perhaps manage to-day with not 200 francs, but a mere 120. Please seal up your letter to M. Ancelle, or else, if it be addressed to me, let it be written in such a fashion that I can send it on to him, without enduring his intolerable reproaches. My other letter will sufficiently explain everything. Above all, save me.

C. B.

Thursday 20th December, 1855.

My dear mother, I have much to say to you and M. Ancelle, who brings you this letter, will inform you why. Heavens, we, he and I, have often enough argued and quarrelled, but nothing to the last two months.

Before everything, I desire to see you. For more than a year now you have refused and I really think that your justifiable anger should be satisfied now. In my situation with regard to you there is something absolutely abnormal and utterly humiliating to me; and that you cannot really wish to maintain. If my desire does not seem to you an adequate reason, at least be generous. I am not really old yet, but I may soon become so, and it seems impossible to me that you should wish to maintain such a situation; I have drunk so deeply of every form of humiliation, that at least I might be spared what comes from you. As I said to you, if without pleasure or faith even, you permit me to reconcile myself with you, let at least a sort of charity enter in.

Yesterday, feeling I was about to leave (*it will be to-morrow*), I began to put a heap of papers in order. I found among them many letters from you, written at different times, and in various circumstances. I tried to re-read some; all were penetrated with a purely material interest, truly, as if one's debts were everything, and one's pleasures and spiritual happiness nothing. But in the end, since they were chiefly maternal, they started the most painful thoughts. All those letters stood for my past years, my mis-spent years. Soon I could bear to read them no longer. Nothing is more odious in certain cases than the past. And so from thought to thought, I reflected that our situation was not only monstrous and shocking, but dangerous, too. That my spirit should be fashioned in a manner which must obviously seem eccentric to you, need not make you conclude that I take a morbid pleasure in my complete solitude and isolation from my mother. I told you that I might grow old; but there is something worse. One of us might die, and really it is dreadful to think that we run the risk of dying without seeing one another. You know my horror of all emphasis. I know how I have wronged you; but whenever I feel something strongly, the fear of exaggerating my expression of it forces me to put it as coldly as I can. You would not be wrong in supposing under my words a heat, an intensity of desire, which I do not express in all their strength, owing to my habitual restraint. But above all, as I said before, grant me this: that to satisfy me materially would not be to completely satisfy me. For a long time now, I have been fairly ill both in body and mind, and I want all together, and at the same time, a complete rejuvenation, an immediate satisfaction of the mind and body. Year adds itself to year without one or other, and really it is hard to bear.

Ancelle will tell you what I should like, nay, my firm resolution, to install myself permanently in lodgings I chose two months ago. That means I shall have rent to pay almost immediately I move in, since I took the rooms two and a

half months ago and could not occupy them for lack of money.

I am unutterably weary of the life of hang-outs and furnished rooms; it destroys me and poisons my life. I do not know how I have managed to hold out so long.

I am sick of having colds, headaches and fevers, and above all of the necessity of going out twice a day, and of snow and mud and rain. I repeat this to him all the time, but he insists on your authorisation, before agreeing.

I am in want of everything; it is a question therefore of a greater sacrifice or a greater advance than usual. But from that I shall derive, and almost immediately, immense benefits; above all, no more wasted time. That is my sore, my open sore; for there is a state more serious than physical pain; it is the dread of seeing used up, totter, and go under, in this horrible existence of perpetual shocks, the wonderful poetical gift, the clarity of thought, and the strength of hope which are really all my capital.

Dear mother, you so little know what a poet's life is, that doubtless you will not understand much of what I have just said; yet it is just there my chief fear lies; I will not expire miserably, I will not age and have no settled existence, I shall NEVER submit to that; I believe that I am valuable; I do not say more so than others, but certainly, valuable to myself.

To return to my installation. I lack everything—furniture, linen, clothes, even pots and pans, matresses and my books, which are scattered among several binders; I need them all, and all, all now. Ancelle cannot undertake to do anything so complicated, as I gave him to understand. And anyhow, all these expenses depend one upon the other. My moving-in depends on the possibility of leaving the place in which I now am. My peace of mind depends on the completeness with which I install myself. A good deal of what I need has already been ordered and in three days all will be

ready. To-morrow I must leave the rue de Seine, or leave all my things there (the book I am at work on! and the printer! and the publishers!), but supposing I receive the money to-day, I could sleep on the floor for two or three days, and work wherever I could; for that I cannot interrupt.

I found my rooms in the district of the Boulevard du Temple, *rue d'Angoulême* 18; the house is a fine one, and above all quiet. I shall at least be lodged like a decent person. And that, as I said, will be a real rejuvenation, for what I need is a life completely hidden, utterly sober and austere.

My two volumes are at last to appear, and next year, by the help of *La Revue des Deux Mondes* and Ancelle, I can manage comfortably. I am not uneasy about that. And I shall be in my own house. You will never again have to endure similar importunities. There will be no reason for them. I have taken every precaution to put my new home completely outside any possibility of misfortune.

Ah! Heavens! I was forgetting the amount. With fifteen hundred francs I should be clear in three days. Candidly, a poet's life is well worth that amount; the sum is no more, no less; I have gone into the matter at least fifty times. It is not much, but it will just do. I asked M. Ancelle very earnestly not to complicate my position by his timidity and fears, and not to try and invent methods for doling out the money; which would spoil its value and use. I must move quickly, very quickly. Then, as I told you, all these expenses most intimately depend upon the other, like a chain of actions. As to the question of *amour-propre* and appearances, that should be immediately obvious.

When I think of what I have to spend, unavoidably, and without essential pleasure or profit, I grow exasperated. I have been adding up what I received from *you, Ancelle, the bookseller Lévy* and the *Pays* this year; it is enormous. Well,

I lived like a beast, a drowned rat. And that will go on for ever, till my imagination fades out with my health, unless I immediately take the steps I say.

This very morning I said to Ancelle something that seemed to me reasonable enough. I said, would you rather I did what so many men of letters do, who have less pride than myself. A thing I have never done under any minister, any government? It would horrify me to ask a minister for money, yet that is almost customary; there are funds to that end. For myself, my pride and care have kept me from such means. Never shall my name appear in the ignoble files of a government. I would rather owe money to everyone; I would rather dispute with you, torment my mother, painful as it is.

Do not be offended if you receive my book after everyone else. I want you to have a special copy. And I am having three copies specially printed.

As for my other literary projects, which so little interest you, I shall speak of them another time. Besides, next year's profits are the same as those of the year which is past; the jobs my frightful existence has prevented me from finishing. A volume of *criticism*, ready,* poems,† ready, and almost sold, a novel and a huge play. I embrace you. I shall not say, I beg you—I shall say only: have a little courage and confidence.

Charles.

To-morrow I must leave; I should have left this district yesterday.

On the whole, reflection made, I have so rarely hidden from M. Ancelle anything of my life, that I judged it advisible to show him this letter, before giving it him for you. I do not think you will find anything offensive in this conduct. He pointed out that the great desire I expressed of seeing you again was perhaps not justified with sufficient reasons. But my regrets, my excuses, show through, leap to the

* Les Curiosités esthetiques.
† *Les Fleurs du Mal.*

eye; I expressed them twice in two letters you did not read. There are things which, so to speak, are thought visibly. Can you suppose it made me happy to offend you and aggravate the truly false opinion you had of me? I beg earnestly yet once again, be generous and you will be satisfied. What hinders us, once I lead a regular life, from meeting at least once a week? In that way I could keep you informed of my affairs, while thanks to the new kindness I demand of Ancelle, there would be no more shocks.

9th January, 1856.

My dear mother, I am sure you thought I would forget to write thanking you. No; the truth is that I was overwhelmed with preoccupations and difficulties; the truth is these difficulties, this enforced vagabondage, makes me lose much time, so that naturally, immediately I feel a little at peace, I have to fill up the gap in my work.

At last and for the first time for I know not how long, I have been able to work assiduously and with security; but I was forgetting to tell you that the real reason of my delay was that I wanted to send you the first volume of my book with this letter.* But there are always delays and more delays. My publisher carries on like a madman about the expenses I run up at the printing office, and about my delays. But I am determined always to behave thus, I mean according to my will, *as to literature* at least. All the same, in three days I shall begin on the second volume. I found I had to see *Ancelle* this morning. I made up my mind to write to you. As soon as the binding is ready, I will send you a copy, and later, if I can, as I hope, obtain some copies on better paper, you will return it in exchange for a new one. As soon as the second volume is finished, and that will take not four months, but only one month, I shall begin to work regularly for *La Revue des Deux Mondes.*

You wished me to read the long letter you wrote to An-

* *Histoires extraordinaires.*

celle; I read it, and, as a matter of fact, I think Ancelle, who is beginning to know me, was afraid I might be offended. But I have more commonsense than he thinks, and there might have been twenty times more maternal details in the letter and I should have been no less deeply touched. The peculiarity of true poets—excuse this small puff of pride, the only one I permit myself—is to be able to get outside themselves and understand a quite different nature.

One passage only, and I am sure you expect an answer on that point, surprised me beyond measure, as much by the belated sentiment it expresses as by its strangeness; I mean in respect to my brother. My brother has hurt me profoundly in two circumstances, one of which you know, one which you ignore. My brother's crime is stupidity, nothing more, but that is much. I should never have imagined you could conceive the project of advising me in this matter; I prefer *evil* beings who know what they are doing to *good stupid folk*. My repulsion as regards my brother is so intense that I hate to be asked if I have a brother. There is nothing so precious in the world as the *poetical temperament* and a *chivalry of sentiment*. His poetical and scientific nullity, his cynical opinions on women, to have which some show at least of gallantry, if not passion, should have been made, all, all, estranges me from him. But need I add, that if ever some unexpected occasion arose, not only am I incapable of injuring my brother, but even of causing him the least vexation? That is not friendship, but the purest sentiment of convention.

Permit me to embrace you, and again express my thanks, which are as truly felt and sincere as you could imagine.

I am now living at 18 *rue d'Angoulême-du-Temple.* I shall doubtless write when I send the book. I sent you a biography of one of my friends, written by me; and an abominable article on me. Ancelle tells me you receive nothing. How strange!

Charles.

Saturday 15*th March*, 1856.

My dear mother, this morning I left a book for you with Ancelle. I should perhaps have posted it. But as I was giving him one for himself, I carelessly left him both. The book appeared three days ago and your volume is one of the first three sent me. Unfortunately, it is dirty and very ugly, and I have even scrawled on the cover in a villainous manner. I thought too late about special copies. That does not matter much, though, for this edition, I have already had time to notice, contains many errors, despite all my care. The edition will soon be exhausted and when the second appears I shall give you a better copy.

Read the preface; it is not the one you know. Hardly fifty lines of the first remain. This one is enough to make one howl. All the same, I succeeded well enough, for from time to time I am still attacked by young good-for-nothings.

I embrace you.

Charles.

12*th April*, 1856.

My dear mother, despite the trouble you seem to take in ignoring me, I am sure that I must please you in thinking of you. I send you two newspapers; one *Le Figaro*, which, some months ago, calumniated me for seven columns, and now thinks it time to insert a fragment of a book, accompanied by an article too flattering, almost dangerous. The fragment is the serial, and the critical article on the sixth page. The other, in *l'Assemblée nationale*, is worthy of an old fool, virtuous and polite. I nearly died of laughter when I read it, but it will help the sales, which are very good. Don't lose this number, I beg you. As the fool's name is very well known, I may feel inclined, in the second notice at the beginning of the second volume, to refute his errors, in which case I must have the article before me. It is the very devil to buy old numbers of newspapers.

I remember I once sent you by post a number of *Figaro*,

that in which your dear son was treated as never thief or convict. I hoped you would have the courage to laugh at it, and added a pamphlet of my own. The papers in question did not arrive. To avoid such a repetition, I write *Madam* in enormous letters.

Two further notices also appeared, kindly but stupid, one in the *Revue de Paris* for April 1st, under *Bibliography*, the other in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* for April 1st under *Bibliography*, the last but one page of the cover, and a number of others of no importance. However, notes or articles will soon appear by Th. Gautier, d'Aurevilly, Philàrète Chasles and Sainte-Beuve, all serious people.

I am not sure that anger begets talent; but supposing it did, I ought to have an enormous amount of it, for I rarely work except between a quarrel and the bailiffs, the bailiffs and a quarrel. I notice, in reference to all these monsters who drive quills, Democrats, and particularly Napoleonists, that none of them dare grapple frankly with the question of poverty and suicide. I hoped that would have taken place. No one has so far fallen into the snare I set them, but it will happen.

Good news! I must, owing to a sequence of different circumstances, next month begin to put in order my *Idées de Théatre*—that is to say, if God or my creditors permit.

My second notice* is giving me hell. I have to talk *religion* and *science;* either it is knowledge which is lacking in me, or else money, or else peace, which is almost the same thing.

I embrace you, perhaps despite yourself.

Charles.

Saturday 5th July, 1856.

My dear mother, despite all those difficulties you can guess at, I have finished my second volume, which is in the press, and have begun the third, the first part of which will appear in the *Moniteur* between the 20th and 30th of this month. I

* *Notes Nouvelles sur Edgar Poe.*

have sold it satisfactorily (2,500), but I cannot ask for a penny before the 20th. Have the kindness to tell Ancelle to advance me 200 francs. *I do not want you* to meet the "complaisance" * for this year, and I assure you that by the first of next January I shall not have drawn more than 2,400 francs from him.

I have definitely quarrelled with *Le Pays,* to which I had promised the work, but what is more amusing, is that M. Mirès † thinks I have had 500 francs from him which I never received. I have just written, informing him of the trick.

I need not send you the numbers of the *Moniteur;* since I presume you take it in. I neglected to send you several articles on myself.

I fear, my dear mother, that you do not know how to laugh, above all when evil is said of your son, yet that heroism is worth all the wit in the world. I did not answer your long letter; to the same reproaches I must make the same excuse: actions speak loudest.

I embrace you.

Charles.

Tuesday 22nd July, 1856.

For some time now I have been installed Quai Voltaire, *Hotel Voltaire,* and if you had wanted to come and see me you would have made me very happy, but I know that I shall not obtain that pleasure. I am fairly ill and that I always shall be. I try to diminish my ills by working regularly. When I have achieved that I shall be the proudest and calmest of men; I shall be saved. Meanwhile, my third and second volumes go ahead. The third will be finished before the return of the person who runs the *Moniteur.*

I believe I have rather broken with Ancelle, and, perhaps,

* *Complaisance—signature of a bill of exchange by which a person pretends for various reasons, to be the debtor of another.*

† *A famous banked proprietor of* Le Pays.

to be candid, I want it to be so. I am worn out, humiliated by my relation to him; and the road to Neuilly, whose every stone I could describe by heart, has for many years now filled me with horror. What is certain is that I shall not go there again. I even think that, to-morrow morning excepted, and with your permission, I shall take nothing more from him.

Yesterday I had a lively scene with him about the merest trifle. *The Editor* of the *Moniteur* is at *Cauterets; Michel Lévy in I know not what other corner of the Pyrenees!* With money in the offing, I thought I could without embarrassment ask him for a mere hundred francs (remember I do not eat at the hotel, since it is too dear, and also I expect a packet of books from New York to-morrow). The quarrel, as I say, was lively, and I think has cured me of the weakness by which in the past I allowed him to use a certain attitude in regard to me which I never permit in anyone else. I know you think I have too serious an idea of my dignity, and that it is always wrong to be in need of money. But, all said and done, I am ill, and I beg you to send me a line for him, which I can forward very early to-morrow morning by messenger. These hundred francs, I promise *you* formally, will be returned to him, or else to you, very soon, in a week maybe. I want you, if the person whom I am sending, finds you in, to give him the letter for Ancelle in an envelope that bears my name, so that she (the person sent by me) cannot divine its object.

What would be infinitely simpler, but really I hardly dare suggest it, is for you to deprive yourself momentarily of one hundred francs. I could then write to Ancelle by post, asking him to return them to you immediately.

In three or four days I will write you again, but very differently, God be thanked! This kind of thing makes me ashamed.

Ancelle pretends to be a victim; and I seem to be playing the martyr. I see only one possible solution; never to take

a penny, or else, in case of dire necessity like the present, to send back the money immediately I make some.

I forgot to tell you that I am returning to *La Revue des Deux Mondes* with something very particular and bizarre, either a novel on *the Ideal of conjugal love,* or a novel to legitimate and explain the sanctity of capital punishment.*

I embrace you.

Charles.

If you are kind enough to visit me, advise me at what hour. Quai Voltaire, Hôtel Voltaire.

Thursday 11*th September,* 1856.

My dear mother, I beg you not to reply as you did in your last letter. I have latterly been through too much torment, too much humiliation and even anguish, for there to be any point in your adding your quota. Some days ago, about twelve, I wanted to write and ask you, Ancelle being absent and in the South, to send me a little money, no matter how little, so that I could leave Paris, amuse myself, kill time; but I should have had to explain, and I will tell you in a moment why I did not. Now, time having passed, and the adventure that befell me having so used my strength that I can no longer work, it is not now a question of pleasure, or of distraction, but of my needs, my urgent needs. I have begun to work again, to stupefy myself. If you only knew to what an extent the shouting and arguing with these brutes depresses me; yet Ancelle may not return for eight or ten days, and this man, my landlord, bothers me beyond all measure for a mere 200 francs. From day to day Michel

* *In* Mon Cœur mis à nu *Baudelaire wrote: "Capital Punishment is the result of a mystical conception, now totally misunderstood. Its aim is not to* save *society, at least* materially. *Its aim is to save (spiritually) society and the criminal. For the sacrifice to be complete there must be consent and joy on the part of the victim. To give chloroform to a man condemned to death would be an impiety, for it would take from him the conscience of his grandeur as victim, and limit his chance of gaining Paradise."*

Lévy puts off signing our third agreement, and my table is covered with uncorrected proofs, so it is a bad moment to borrow money from him. The man here insists on having his money to-morrow. Note that I could appease him with less, a hundred francs or 150; but I have an obsession that I must use the rest in order to see you, not for long, a day or two, and don't be alarmed, not in your house, for I shall go to a hotel. You will come and embrace me, and I shall go back. In any case I have an immense amount to do and so I cannot stay long away. I must obviously take some money from Ancelle immediately he returns, but in the event of your sending me some, I shall not take any from him so as to make up, and I should let him know what I had done.

As I have just told you, I did not write, though I desired intensely to do so, and though at that moment I thought you still in Paris, because the explanations I should have had to give you would have made you happy, a kind of maternal happiness I could not have endured. My state of mind must have been obvious, for Michel Lévy, seeing me in that state, now depressed, now furious, asked no questions and left me to myself; not even pressing me to work.

My liaison, my liaison of fourteen years with Jeanne, is broken. I did all that was humanly possible to prevent the rupture. This tearing apart, this struggle, has lasted fifteen days. Jeanne replies imperturbably that nothing can be done with my character, and that anyhow I shall myself some day thank her for her resolution. There you see the gross bourgeois wisdom of women. For myself, I know that, whatever agreeable happening comes to me, joy, money or vanity, I shall always regret this woman. Lest my sorrow, whose cause you may not understand very easily, should appear too childish to you, I will confess that on that head, like a gambler, I had rested all my hopes; that woman was my sole distraction, my only pleasure, my one comrade, and despite all the interior torment of so tempestuous a relation, never had I envisaged the idea of an irreparable separation.

Even now, though I am calm, I surprise myself thinking when I see some fine object, a lovely landscape, or anything agreeable, why is she not here, to admire it with me, to buy it with me? You see I do not cover up my wounds. It took me a long time, I assure you, the shock was so violent, to believe that perhaps work might make me happy, and that after all I had certain duties to accomplish. I had in my mind an everlasting, 'to what end?' Not to mention a kind of obscure veil before the eyes, and an eternal singing in the ears. That lasted a long time, but now it is over. When I saw clearly that it really was *irreparable*, I was seized with indescribable fury; for ten days I could not sleep, I vomited all the time, and had to hide, because of my continual tears. However, my obsession was egotistic. I saw before me an interminable series of years, without family, without friends, without a mistress, years of solitude and hazard, and nothing to gratify the soul. Even my pride was no consolation to me. For it was all my own fault; I used and abused; it amused me to martyrise, and I was martyred in my turn. Then I was seized with superstitious terror, I imagined you were ill. I sent to enquire, and learned you were away and that you were well; at least, so they said, but repeat it in your letter.

Why go on with a narrative which may only seem strange to you? I should never have imagined that a mental sorrow could engender such physical torment, and that, a fortnight after, I could go about my affairs, like any other man. I am alone, quite alone, for ever, more than probably. For I never can again, *with my mind*, place any confidence in these creatures, *no more than in myself*, since henceforth there is nothing for me but to occupy myself with questions of money and vanity, and with no other joy but literature.

I could not see Ancelle before he left. I knew he would go through Bordeaux and I wrote to him *poste restante*. I said simply that perhaps on his return I should ask him to help that unhappy woman, to whom I have left nothing but debts, and that after all, having nothing to occupy myself

with but myself, I could allow myself this funereal prodigality. His answer seemed unfavourable. But it is a question which can be easily put off to a later date.

The second and third volumes of Poe will appear almost simultaneously.

Answer me at once; for you know that it is not a vulgar question of money only, however much of a nuisance that may be, that made me write to you. To make things worse, I believe that the solicitor who succeeded Ancelle, has also gone South. I still work, but only through distraction, and I am bored to death. There are still moments when everything seems utterly void. I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

Hotel Voltaire, Quai Voltaire.
4th November, 1856.

My dear mother, I do not want this day to pass * without assuring you in these few lines that I never forget you; a few lines only, for you know how idle I am, and how it results later in my being stuck fast in urgent work. That is how I am placed just now. For the rest, I think, you may have entire confidence in my destiny. The fears you expressed to me are vain. If the question of money is difficult to unravel, my mental health, which is of most importance, is excellent. The accident which at first so much cast me down, so puerile to the unimaginative, and so frightful for me, has lately produced in me an immoderate thirst for life. I am writing the second preface, that is *the introduction to les nouvelles histoires extraordinaires,* which I shall send you shortly. As for the third volume, you will read it day by day since you receive the *Moniteur.*

Will you forgive me if I smile, just a little, at the desire you so continually express to see me *like everyone else,* and worthy of your old friends, whom you name so complacently.

* *Saint Charles'.*

Alas! You know that I do not belong there, and that my destiny will be other. Why do you not, like all mammas, speak to me of marriage?

To speak quite sincerely, the thought of that woman has never left me, but I am so perfectly broken in to the business of life, nothing but lies and vain promises, that I feel myself incapable of falling again into the same inextricable snares of the heart. The poor creature is ill now, and I have refused to go and see her. For a long time she avoided me like the plague, for she knew my fearful temperament, nothing but craft and violence. I know that she ought to leave Paris, and I am glad, although I confess it makes me sad to think she might die far away from me.

To sum myself up briefly: I have a hellish thirst for pleasure, glory and power. That, I must say, is often, but not often enough, is it, my dear mother? in conflict with the desire to please you.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

Let me know briefly how you are.

Wednesday 26th November, 1856.

My dear mother, I did not answer you at the beginning of the month because your letter was so severe, really too much so. You really have too great a desire to talk wisdom and worldly wisdom, too.

To-day I earnestly beg you to procure me through M. Ancelle a quite small sum of money for an urgent and pressing need. My year's allowance is quite exhausted, and I dare not write to him without a word from you. It is a matter of 80 francs; send me a letter authorising a hundred.

I am not sure if I can count on you; but at any rate I shall be less anxious if I write.

I shall not write to thank you until after December 5,

when I shall send you the book. I think I am now in a position to affirm that with the end of this year, the most cruel of all, some part of my torment and anguish is about to end. This year will end agreeably. The first three months of next year will be occupied with literature. In the spring I shall go to England on a mission related to the Arts. It is something similar to what you once promised you would get for me through Mademoiselle de Mirbel (who, in parenthesis, misled me), so now I manage my own affairs. I shall doubtless see the Minister next month. I implore you, let me have a word from you on Friday morning.

I embrace you.

Charles.

Saturday 27th December, 1856.

My dear mother, I thank you most deeply for your letter. Through your inevitable reproaches I divined a charming maternal intention, and the expression of a sentiment of which I am indeed deprived. Your letter is exaggerated; I am not ill; the book has not appeared, but it will. It is ready, but the preface drags interminably, as a result of my interminable worries about money. Really on that subject you should be more indulgent. A few days ago I began suddenly to work for *Le Moniteur,* and then, as you might have seen, my place was taken first by *M. About's Germaine,* and then by another serial. The third volume should have begun three days ago. Perhaps it is only held up a very short time.

I repeat, and would like to repeat it convincingly, it might perhaps have been easier to say than to write, that I was touched by your letter. I work at night and sleep during the day. You will infallibly find me in *between eleven and three,* the best time. Be kind enough to send me a word above all about your health, and then say the hour and day. I did not answer you at once, because, thanks to the new mishap with *Le Moniteur,* I have been tormented afresh.

I embrace you with all my heart and say positively that you continually exaggerate your fears. I love you enough not to hide from you anything of my life.

Charles.

Sunday 8th February, 1857.

My dear mother, the serial on Australia finished this morning in the *Moniteur.** So my turn is coming. Out of eighteen parts, ten are ready, and only eight remain. All will be printed by *Saturday.* To-morrow, *Monday,* I shall ask for 500 francs on account. They will probably refuse. I want Ancelle to lend me them for a week. The week after I shall take a *thousand* and shall immediately send him back the 500. That we have never done before, because he would not have it so, for he is obstinate, childish and short-sighted beyond all belief. Actually nothing could be simpler nor easier. As there is a possibility that the lack of 500 francs might bother him, let him send me at once whatever he can, telling me on what day exactly he will send me the rest.

You will understand that *if I cannot even wait a week for* 500 *francs,* I must be in grave difficulties. To-morrow, Monday, I must get clear of two or three important debts.

I am devilishly impatient to get away as soon as possible and live elsewhere. But as I only came here to work more comfortably on *Le Moniteur,*† I don't want to go away until I have finished the last number, which, as I told you, will be next Sunday.

You told me, six weeks ago, that you wanted me never to ask you for money again. Nothing is more just, and I know what I promised. Not only that, but I promised myself to leave this year with M. Ancelle 1,500 francs, so as to diminish your debt. But this is quite another thing.

It is a week's "complaisance" for the purpose of refreshing my brain.

* Les Lettres d'un Mineur en Australie *by Antoine Fauchery.*
† *Its offices occupied room 13 at the Hôtel Voltaire.*

You were angry because I did not answer you. Really, how can you have so little indulgence? Do you not guess in the midst of what shocks and earthquakes I exist, and that, often my pen, so to speak, is not my own, that really my time is not at my own disposal.

Since I saw you (now a long time, and I do not know to what to attribute your disappearance, dare I say your rancour) I have finished, utterly finished, the *nouvelles histoires extraordinaires.*

After having spent a day in an overheated studio, I was caught at ten o'clock at night by the cold streets and train, and returned cruelly indisposed.

Yesterday I gave a different printer the whole manuscript of the *Fleurs du Mal.* There only remains, before giving myself up to other kinds of work (stories and plays), to finish the novel for the *Moniteur,* and four more *Variétés* to complete the *études d'art,* which, as you know, are sold to the same publisher * who bought the *Fleurs du Mal.* Everything will be cleared up by the end of *March;* then I shall grow a new skin; shall I be happier? Alas!

As to my budget for these two months, it is very slight, as you can judge.

Moniteur, 1,800 francs. Four articles, *Variétés,* of which two are for *L'Artiste,* one for the *Moniteur,* one for a *Review,* worth roughly 150 francs each, altogether 600 francs, grand total 2,400 francs.

But, I must pay 2,000 francs at once. So I shall only have 400 francs to cover the expenses of two months; it is ghastly.

I shall work all evening and all night; I shall sleep a lot to-morrow morning, while awaiting your visit or your answer.

I was just about to forget a vulgar but most important thing. I have no linen and have caught cold. Could you find me three or four large handkerchiefs, which I shall return

* *Poulet-Mallassis.*

to you washed. When I say I shall sleep to-morrow morning, you will guess the sort of sleep I mean.

I want not to think of big gains or of paying my debts until I have got rid of all this mass of old material which comes to about five fat volumes. What Divinity will prove propitious? if only my imagination, worn out by so many demands on it, is not extinguished! *I will be strongest.*

That is what I repeat to myself, but mechanically. Have not stronger men than myself had their moments of despair? Ah, yes, but I hope that the beginning of my letter will not hinder you from coming to see me. I embrace you miserably.

Charles.

Monday 9th February, 1857.

My dear mother, I have just received your letter at three o'clock exactly, and I answer it on the instant.

To begin with, I expected a complete refusal to mix yourself in the matter; therefore, I am not put out. I hope God will inspire me to find by to-morrow morning the 500 francs I needed this morning.

It was quite useless to write to Ancelle; you know that he is much too stupid to do anything on his own; therefore, I could not send to him without your consent. The wretched man has been my complete ruin, without knowing it, and the ruin of my fortune and my time. He will never know the immense compensation he owes me.

As for you, dear mother, I must confess that I understood nothing of your letter, absolutely nothing, except that there were abuses to make good, which I am perfectly aware of. *I live in awful solitude and in a permanent state of anguish, and you add your insults.* Really, it is too much. One should say no calmly and talk of something else.

What is most amusing is that I expected, not a service of the kind I demanded (I felt that you would understand nothing of what I meant, I would wager that you do not really understand my letters any more than I do yours), I

expected, as I say, some kind of compliment, at least congratulation, on my courage and activity, which survive so much humiliation and injustice and have made a martyr of me; perhaps the strangest martyr in Paris. Also I hoped for some word of tenderness and of encouragement. But there was nothing, nothing. Really, to say all I think, it is impossible, it has always been impossible for me to understand on what your mind was nourished, impossible to divine the atmosphere you lived in. Sometimes you showed such obstinacy in small things that, far from feeling anger, I felt completely disarmed at those moments, and ready to pardon everything.

I know how much these last lines will hurt you; you will not understand them, you will imagine yourself insulted. And yet, I swear, I know you love me, are devoted to me, and that I know I must acquit myself towards you of an immense debt of devotion. But heavens! how dangerous, how maladroit, your affection is!

All the same the truth must out sometimes, and really it is too much to have to put up with loads of insults (yes, they are insults!) at the most difficult moments.

Then, when one has the misfortune to be in debt, they grow continually, and every expense grows too, and there is no means of arresting the wretched state of affairs. That is a commonplace well known to those who are miserable enough to be in debt. And I know that until I am completely out of debt I shall always be in hell. And it is you who are responsible for that state of things, but I do not love you less.

I beg you, if you find some bitterness in this letter, do all you can to excuse it; it will not be difficult, if you think of what I have to endure in this wretched situation, which has lasted so long.

I will not see Ancelle. All our affairs will be settled by letter. Thus you will not need to uphold him, since he will not be attacked. You understand that the idiot has *used up*

too much of my time and my nerves for me not to take care of what remains.

And to begin with, I intend simply to write to him that, *wishing to leave one thousand five hundred francs with him* this year, and having received from him four hundred and thirty francs, besides one hundred and twenty francs he paid for me, I ask him to tell me *in what month and on what day* it will please him to send me the difference, that is to say, three hundred and fifty francs. Nothing more; and *he will not reply as he always does.*

I embrace you with all my heart, and I beg you to let me know on what day you will come to see me.

The fifty francs (!) are maternal, but the handkerchiefs are a stroke of genius.

Charles.

Dear mother, I thank you very much. I should have been glad to find a note from you in the parcel. But you may have wanted to punish me and remind me that I have too often neglected you.

I do not wish to bother or weary you with my vexations. It is enough for you to know that not one day passes without my eyes turning in the direction of your tent.

What a void surrounds me! what darkness! what shadows of the mind and what fears for the future!

I embrace and love you.

Charles.

VI.

LETTERS WRITTEN BETWEEN THE DEATH OF MONSIEUR AUPICK AND THE VISIT TO BELGIUM.

(1857–1864.)

Wednesday 3rd June, 1857.

My dear mother, I awaited Valère* with a certain impatience (not that I want to give that as an excuse for not having written to you), but for a reason you are aware of. I know that debts so much disturb you that I am deeply interested in the result of the sale.

Well, Valère came this morning; all the furniture brought 25,000 francs. Valère says that the grand total (including the horses, the harness and carriages) ought to be about 32,000 francs. It seems a good figure, fairly near what you hoped, and sufficient to relieve your mind of base preoccupations. Tell me definitely what they are and if you feel completely relieved. You sent me, not long ago, an outrageous compliment on the change of my manner in regard to you, which proves that, though my mother, you do not completely understand me. The sale, your debts (momentary), your health, your isolation, all interest me; believe me, what is large or important, what is common and trivial, mean all they do to me, not from filial duty, but from love.

I want briefly to explain my conduct and feelings since the death of my father-in-law. You will find in this short explanation, my attitude towards that great misfortune and towards my future conduct. The event was to me a solemn one and a reminder. I have often been harsh and not very

* *A servant of Madame Aupick.*

honest towards you, my poor mother; for I could always think that someone was consecrated to your happiness; but the first idea that struck me after his death was that from now onward it must naturally be myself to bear that charge. All that I allowed myself, aloofness, egotism, violent rudeness, such as are always to be found in isolation and dissoluteness, all that is now forbidden me. All that it is humanly possible to do in order to make a new and particular felicity for you during the latter part of your life, that *shall be done.* After all, it is not so difficult, since you attach so much importance to the success of my projects, in working for myself I shall also work for you.

As for my miserable debts and my celebrity, so indolently sought till now, yet so painful in conquering, *do not let them too much disquiet you.* Provided that each day a little of what one has to do is done, all human difficulties resolve themselves naturally. I demand of you but one thing (for myself); that is, to take care of yourself and live long, as long as ever you can.

Valère was very amiable; he even expressed a thought I should not have expected from a servant, for he said: *Your mother must have sustained a heavy blow and been much afflicted to go back there alone; yet I know she is well in health.*

He was astonished by the immense amount of things he had to send off to *Honfleur* (a whole 'bus full) and he does not think you will find room for everything.

I have gone through *le Moniteur* every day. Nothing up to now. I lose patience. How comes a measure voted by the Council of State not to be submitted sooner to the Emperor for signature? Perhaps there is an order of precedence to be observed. But it seems to me that it might have been ratified sooner.*

I have come from the binder. You will be pleased, I am

** This refers to the pension applied for by Mme. Aupick and which had just been granted her. It was for 6,000 francs.*

sure. All is perfectly *whitened.* The torn pages have been arranged as well as possible; but you will be astonished by the art with which a book that seemed ruined can be REJUVENATED. He wants ten more days to arrange the pages and bind.

Goodbye, dear mother, reply *minutely* to me, and be certain that I belong to you absolutely, and only to you.

I think next week to be able to send you something by myself.

Charles.

Tell me again what you said in reference to the tomb. I shall do exactly as you bid.

I have just heard that the order did not appear in the *Moniteur,* but was inserted in the *Bulleton des lois,* 25 May, 1857. I was astonished by the way your name was written: *Archenbaut.*

Thursday 9th July, 1857.

I assure you that you need not in any way feel worried about me; but it is you who disquiet me, and intensely, for decidedly the letter you sent me and its deep desolation were not reassuring. If you so abandon yourself to your grief you will fall ill, and that would be the worst of misfortunes, and to me the most unendurable of anguishes. I want you not only to seek diversion, but also to enjoy new pleasures. Madame Orfila seems to me a very reasonable woman.

As to my silence, do not seek the reason other than in those languors which, to my great shame, often seize upon and hinder me not only from every kind of work, but from fulfilling the simplest duties. Also, I wanted both to write to you and to send you your prayer-book and my book of verses.

The prayer-book is not quite finished; workmen, even the most intelligent, are so stupid that there were some slight mistakes to be put right. It gave me a little trouble, but the result will please you.

As to the Poésies (which appeared about a fortnight ago), I had at first, as you know, meant not to show them you. But on second thoughts, it seemed to me that since you might after all hear the volume spoken of, at least in the notices I send you, shame on my part would be almost as foolish as prudery on yours. The publisher sent me sixteen copies on ordinary paper and four on rag. I have kept you one of these last, and if it has not yet reached you, it is because I wanted to send it you bound. You know that I have never considered Literature and the Arts but as pursuing an end careless of morality; and that I think beauty of conception and style sufficient.

But this book, whose title, *Fleurs du Mal*, explains everything, is clothed, you will see, in cold and sinister beauty, and was created with rage and patience. Besides, the proof of its positive value lies in all the evil that has been said of it. The book infuriates people. Also, afraid myself of the horror I was about to inspire, I cut out a third in proof. People refuse me everything: power of invention and even a knowledge of French. I despise all those imbeciles, for I know that this volume, with its defects and its qualities, will make its way in the minds of the literary public beside the best work of Victor Hugo, of Théophile Gautier, and even of Byron. One counsel only I give you, since you live with the Emon family, do not let the volume fall into the hands of Mademoiselle Emon. As to the Curé, whom doubtless you receive, you may if you like show him the volume. He will think I am damned, and will not dare tell you. There was a rumour that I am going to be prosecuted; but nothing will happen. A Government which has to manage the fearful elections of Paris has no time to prosecute a madman.

A thousand apologies for all this childishness of vanity. I had indeed thought of coming to Honfleur; but did not dare mention it to you. I thought of cauterising my laziness once and for all by working intensely by the sea, and far

from any frivolous preoccupations—either on the third volume of Edgar Poe, or on my first play, which I must get born, whether or no.

But I have much to do which cannot be done in a place without libraries, engravings or museums. I must first exhaust the question of the *Curiosités Esthétiques*, the *Poèmes nocturnes*, and the *Confessions d'un Mangeur d'opium*.

The *Poèmes Nocturnes* are for the *Revue de Paris; Confessions of an Opium Eater* is a new translation of a magnificent writer, unknown in Paris, and will go to the *Moniteur*.

I ought to have thought (why should I not say all) of M. Emon.* He is your friend and I try not to displease you. But do you think I can forget his inferiority, his brutality, and the churlish manner in which he accepted my hand on that terrible day, when, to please you, and only for that, I humiliated myself more than you had ever humiliated me in all the long years?

Ancelle is well: *I have only seen him twice since you left.* He is as absent-minded as ever, and as slow-witted, and he goes on loving his wife and daughter unblushingly.

I return the letter from the man I do not know. I do not know who M. Durand is.

When I went to see the tomb of my step-father, I was astonished to find myself face to face with an empty grave. I went to the sexton, who told me of the transfer, and who gave me as a map the scrap of paper I enclose.† Our wreaths, withered by the heavy rains, had been carefully placed upon the new sepulchre. I added others.

I embrace you, dear mother, most affectionately.

C. B.

* *J. L. Emon, Mme. Aupick's neighbor at Honfleur, and executor of the General's will, had dissuaded the mother from living with the son.*

† *The General Aupick and his widow are buried in the same tomb as Charles Baudelaire in Montparnasse.*

27th July, 1857.

My dear mother, you must never hold me responsible for my delays, most of all at this moment.

Send to your library at Honfleur for the *Moniteur* of Tuesday, July 14, where you will find me praised quite extravagant * ; after which, when I have informed you that *M. Abatucci* sought a quarrel with *M. Fould* in regard to the articles, saying: *Why do you praise a work I want to get prosecuted?* you will understand that I am a cause of conflict between three ministers.

M. Fould thinks he ought to defend me. Will he sacrifice me? That is the question.

M. Billault is so enraged that he has forbidden the *Pays* to mention me. *That is absolutely illegal,* for I have not been condemned; I have only been summoned. I am going to get a copy of the article which M. Billault has illegally forbidden the printing of. I shall have it printed on placards in the printing office of one of my friends, and I shall send one to *M. Fould,* one to *M. Pietri,* one to *the Judge,* one to my *lawyer* (I have none yet) and one to *M. Billault* himself.†

I have for me, *M. Fould, M. Sainte-Beuve,* and *M. Merimée* (who is not only a famous man of letters, but the only representative of literature in the Senate), *M. Pietri,* who is very powerful, and, like *M. Merimée,* the intimate friend of the Emperor.

But I need a woman; there might perhaps be some means of interesting the Princesse Mathilde in the affair, but I rack my brains to find how.

I appeared before the Judge. My cross-examination lasted three hours. He seemed quite benevolent in regard to me.

Your copy is now bound. I shall arrange for it to reach

* *By Edoyard Thierry.*

† *M. Billault was then Minister for the Interior; M. Fould, Minister of State; M. Abatucci, Minister of Justice; and M. Pietri, Chief of Police.*

you without danger (for the book is banned). The same for your prayer-book, which has been bound and which I dare not put in the post. Fear nothing. I have paid the binder.

I wanted to hide all this from you, but surely that would have been absurd. Do not agitate yourself needlessly, as you always do; besides, I have solid shoulders. Make no confidences to M. Hémon [*sic*].

You will see, therefore, that my visit to Honfleur must be very much delayed. Besides, despite all the time this affair takes up, I must finish four volumes: the third volume of *Edgar Poe,* the *poèmes nocturnes* (mine), the *Curiosités esthétiques* (mine) and the *Mangeur d'opium* (translation of a book by De Quincey). Moreover, before the end of the year, I must finish my play and a novel at Honfleur.

Everyone wants me not to say a word at the hearing, for fear lest I give way to one of my fits of rage.

They also beg me to have a famous lawyer on good terms with the Minister of State, *M. Chaix d'Est-Ange,* for example.

I embrace you, and beg you to consider this scandal (which is arousing real feeling in Paris) only as the beginning of my fortune.

Charles.

Christmas Day, 25th December, 1857.

My dear mother, this evening or to-night (alas, if I have time) I shall write you a long letter and send you a parcel which was ready for you a long time ago. I say *if I have time* for *for several months* now I have been in one of those frightful languors that interrupt everything; and since the beginning of the month my table has been covered with proofs that I have not the heart to correct; yet there inevitably comes a moment when one must, however painfully, rise out of these abysses of indolence.

These accursed festivals have the privilege of cruelly re-

minding us of the flight of time; of how badly we use it, and how full of sorrow it is! I will explain to you to-night how I was led—after resolving to occupy myself ceaselessly with you—to withdraw suddenly all my confidence. Even if you do not completely understand why, at least you will confess that I was in a certain sense justified.

Solitude, without affection and without work, is something decidedly horrible, but I am sure, for you have more courage than I, that you endure yours better than I do mine. I am in a pitiable state of mind and body; so bad that I envy everyone.

The packet I intend for you contains firstly, some articles by myself which appeared late this year (I was again summoned to the courts, and was all but prosecuted for my article on *Madame Bovary*, a book which was prosecuted and then acquitted); then some of the articles printed about *Fleurs du Mal*, by various nobodies (for there were so many that, in the end, tired as much by their praise as by their stupid insults, I no longer deigned to read them); you can judge of the sinister light my book threw into those places where I wanted to throw part of my rage and melancholy; and finally, *the book itself*, which you so strangely repulsed when you thought well to join your reproaches to the insults which assailed me on all sides.

I would have liked to offer you for Christmas the third volume of Edgar Poe,* but, as I have just confessed, the proofs have been on my table for a month, without my being able to shake off my painful inactivity.

This copy of the *Fleurs* is my own. I owe it to you, since I gave yours to M. Fould. Those were the last two copies on Dutch paper. I can get myself an ordinary copy. I shudder with laziness when I think that for the book to be sold legally it must be printed all over again, and that six new poems must be composed to replace the six that were condemned.

* *The adventures of Arthur Gordon Pym.*

I shall send you the packet, with a more detailed letter, to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest.

I embrace you and I wish you from now on to make every allowance for me, for I have, I assure you, the greatest need of it. If ever a man were ill, with an illness medicine cannot cure, I am that man.

Charles.

31st December, 1857.

Decidedly, I have much to complain of in myself, and I am astonished and alarmed by my condition. Do I need a change of air? I cannot tell. Is it my sick body that weakens my will and mind, or is it a spiritual cowardice wears out my body? I do not know. But what I do feel is an immense discouragement, a sensation of unbearable isolation, a perpetual fear of some remote disaster, an utter disbelief in my capacity, a total absence of desire, an impossibility of finding any kind of interest. The strange success of my book and the hatred it roused interested me for a little, but afterwards I fell back again. You see, dear mother, that I am in a fairly grave condition for a man whose profession is to produce and clothe creatures of the imagination. I ask myself unceasingly: what is the good of this? What is the good of that? There you have the veritable soul of spleen. No doubt, in remembering that I have already gone through similar states and got over them, my situation need not too much alarm me, but I also never remember having been so low or remained so long in this state of depression. Add to that the despair caused by perpetual poverty, causes of irritation and interruptions of work due to old debts (*be at ease, this is not a warning appeal to your weakness; it is not yet time,* FOR VARIOUS REASONS, the chief of which is the weakness and laziness which I confess to), the offensive and repulsive contrast of my spiritual honour with this precarious and wretched existence, and finally, to confess all, strange

feelings of suffocation and troubles of the stomach and bowels which have lasted a month. All I eat stifles me or gives me the colic. If the mind could cure the body, some form of violent work would cure me, but I must will, and that is enfeebled; a vicious circle.

Supposing that all January well employed sufficed me to finish all I can finish only in Paris, and that in February I came to work on new things near you in Honfleur, could I find, if not in Honfleur then in Le Havre, a fencing master?

By taking that up again I should satisfy my need for physical exercise. And then also, should I find, not at Honfleur but at Le Havre, a bath establishment where I could take cold baths and showers.

I must now tell you, very briefly, what hindered me, not from coming to Honfleur (I could not do so), but from answering you. I feared afflicting you and being misunderstood. The day after my step-father's death, you told me I dishonoured you, and forbade me (before even I had thought of making such a demand) ever to think of living near you. Then you constrained me to make humiliating advances of friendship to M. Emon. Do me the justice, my dear mother, of admitting that I supported with humility and patience all your sad situation dictated. But later, when, having sent me letters which contained nothing but bitterness and complaint, and having reproached me for the wretched book, which after all was only a *work of art*, and very justifiable; you invited me to come and see you, giving me to understand that it was the absence of M. Emon that permitted my stay in Honfleur, *as if M. Emon was in a position to open or close my mother's door to me*, you finally advised me not to get into debt at Honfleur, then, on my honour, I was so astonished, so bewildered that it is possible I became unjust. You see what lasting traces your letter has left on me. I did not know what to answer or resolve; after reading it I became inexpressibly agitated, and finally, after a fortnight, not knowing what to do, I resolved to do nothing.

I really think, my dear mother, you have never been aware of my intolerable sensitiveness.

Actually, we are very alone and very weak, for I do not believe my brother counts for much. Suppose we made a real attempt to make each other happy.

I have something slightly disagreeable to tell you, which I would rather have hidden from you, had it not been an indication that similar errors may have been committed. Doubtless the honour of the deed is M. Emon's. Some months ago, I discovered in a shop in the *Passage des Panoramas* a picture by my father (a naked figure, a reclining woman seeing two figures in a dream). I had no money at all, not even to leave a deposit, and the miserable torrent of daily futility made me forget it. Do you think many blunders of this kind have taken place? My father was a detestable artist, but all those old things have a moral value.

Goodbye, my dear mother, tell me what you augur as to your health, if being at Honfleur suits you; and that you mean to live a long time for my sake. I embrace you and imagine that you embrace me.

Charles.

Monday 11*th January*, 1858.

My dear mother, you have guessed right; I am riddled with affairs and worries. I do not refer to them, as that would hurt you unnecessarily.

In addition, and as if to increase my difficulties, I can only walk with the utmost difficulty; the right leg is swollen, and cannot be bent, and the pain is exceedingly strange; some say it is cramp, others neuralgia.

I thank you for your medicinal recipes; I have put them carefully aside and shall use them. My stomach for the present is better, thanks to ether, and the colics are eased by opium. But opium has terrible inconveniences.

Come at once, you say. But you cannot imagine the amount of work I have to finish first and all I have to pay.

And besides, as I told you, there are manuscripts which could not be finished away. If I explained in detail, it would be excessively long and useless.

I have, I repeat, definitely made up my mind to move to Honfleur, at, I hope, the beginning of February. At the end of January I shall begin to send you one by one packets and boxes containing my few things.

I must make a lot of money to escape from Paris. You would not believe what I pay in the way of interest, the bailiffs' expenses, etc., I have neither the courage nor the genius of Balzac, yet I have all the complications that made him so wretched.

I shall only pay what is indispensable, and, at the last moment, I count on the Manager of the Gaîté lending me a sum of a thousand or 1,500 francs on the Drama I have begun. That will help to clear up the final difficulties.

I have told several friends of my determination to move to Honfleur. They all say it is a stroke of genius. Yes, indeed, for thus, I shall suppress all the agitation, and useless errands, and have, finally, the solitude I so much love. Also, I hope that, since in Paris and surrounded by numberless and nameless torments, I can gain five or six thousand francs by working very little, in conditions of tranquillity I shall gain much more.

There remain two questions which are fairly difficult of solution. I shall have to come fairly often to Paris, to see the managers of newspapers, reviews and theatres, and settle a host of small affairs. That would entail heavy expenses, often repeated, and I fear the administrators of railways are extremely stingy in the matter of free passes.

Secondly, I shall be the cause of at least one expense, that of my food, and we must arrange how much.

Evidently you did not notice that in the *Fleurs du Mal* there were two poems concerning you, or at least alluding to some of the intimacies of our former life, and your widowhood; which left me with such sad and strange memories;

one, *Je n'ai pas oublié, voisine de la ville* (Neuilly) and the one which follows it: *La servante au grand cœur dont vous etiez jalouse* (Mariette)? I left the poems without titles and without definite indications, because I hate prostituting the intimacies of family life.

I scrawl most fearfully. I have written this straight off. Goodbye.

Charles.

Friday 19th February, 1858.

Dear mother, you wrote me a very charming letter (the only one of its kind for many years) some three weeks ago, and which is still unanswered. You must have been painfully astonished. For myself, when I read that letter, I saw that I was still loved, more than I should have thought, and that many things might be repaired, and that we might still hope for much happiness.

In the various ways in which you have no doubt tried to explain my silence, you may perhaps have lacked indulgence. The truth is that your letter was so utterly kind and maternal that it almost pained me. I suffered, seeing how very sincerely you wanted me near you, and thinking that I would have to afflict you, since I was not yet ready.

First I dare not go from Paris leaving an unfinished book behind.* You know the fearful care with which I do everything. I should have been uneasy, and with reason. (The book has eight signatures; I am at the fifth, and the rest, if I work rapidly, might be finished in ten days.)

Then think of the horrible existence I lead, and which leaves me so little time to work, and of the multiplicity of problems I must solve before I leave (thus, at the beginning of the month, I had to waste six days in hiding, for fear of being arrested. And I had left the books and manuscripts I was working on at home. This is but one of the thousand details of my life).

* *The strange story of Arthur Gordon Pym.*

To have joy within reach, almost in the hand, and not be able to seize it! And to know, not only that I shall be happy, but that I shall bring happiness to someone to whom I owe it.

Add to all that suffering this, which perhaps you will not understand: when a man's nerves are enfeebled by a host of disquietudes and suffering, the devil, in spite of all his resolutions, glides into his brain every morning in the form of this thought. Why not rest for a day in oblivion of all things? This very night I shall clear up all urgent work. And then night comes, the mind is terrified by the multitude of things in arrear; an overwhelming sadness brings impotence in its train; and the next day the same comedy is enacted, with the same confidence and the same knowledge. . . .

Friday 26th February, 1858.

My dear mother, your letter, which I could only await in trembling, and which overwhelmed me with so sudden a joy, has had the same result as the news of a misfortune. Judge of my agitation; I hardly slept for two whole days.

Yesterday and the day before I was so disturbed that I could not answer you.

I was so uncertain of my success that I tried the expedient of borrowing from an usurer. I was asked 800 francs as interest for a year, and that on condition of monthly or quarterly repayments. I only tell you this to show you how much I desire to get away. *I have just written to the scoundrel to say I no longer need his services.*

I have also written to various people whom I want to pay before I leave, that I will pay them next week.

At last, at last then, I am understood. If now I do not make proper use of your supreme kindness, then my will and mind have gone, and I am good for nothing.

It was time, too! I hope everything from the new move; rest, work and health. *For I believe I am sick,* and a sick man, *even hypochondriac,* is a sick man. What else are these

perpetual fears, the shortness of breath and the palpitation, above all during sleep?

Ten days after I receive the money I shall be at Honfleur. I imagine there will not be more than three cases; the first will contain books. Two things embarrass me because they are difficult to pack, my table and my lamp, and yet it would be repugnant to me to sell them.

How could you imagine I would risk seeing Ancelle before he had been informed by you of my project, of your desire, and of the ends I pursue? I would wager that even after your letter he will do his best not to carry out your wishes, but to carry them out as slowly as possible. The necessity of seeing him frightens me. I am sure I shall have to see him often, and so lose much time; and I have so little to myself! You cannot imagine, when in the past you helped me with money, how often he ruined its effect by squeezing it out drop by drop. Thus I lost time on every occasion, and there was a great loss of money, too.

You cannot conceive what a visit to Neuilly means to me. It is painful, disturbing, an exhausting uncertainty; and then I have to talk for hours on literature and politics, when my thoughts are elsewhere, before I can come to facts. The good fellow will never guess how often I have cursed him.

Let him fish up the money where *he likes,* and the RECEIPT I SHALL GIVE HIM WILL SUGGEST THAT I SHALL NEVER TAKE MORE THAN 50 FRANCS A MONTH *from him until everything is repaid.* That is my firm intent, and the more prudent, though originally I had the heroic intention of taking nothing at all.

Now comes the question of creditors.

I will not have you give up yourself to your old terrors.

The actual situation, which is urgent, is cleared up by the 3,000 francs.

As to the old creditors, at the very worst only one or two of the old tigers wakes up once a year. Do you suppose then

that I never make any money. Sometimes I make 2,000 francs straight off, as it were, and then comes a hiatus, an interruption of money. The whole question lies in governing myself, which I have never done nor known how to do.

And do you think I shall say to them: *Proceed violently against me when I am with my mother.* I HIDE MY DEPARTURE FROM EVERYONE, except from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the *Moniteur*, the *Revue contemporain*, the manager of a theatre, and *Michel Lévy*, that is to say, the people I have need of and who will send me money.

When I have money to send to Paris, I shall employ M. Marin in my affairs. I have been very grateful for his help lately. Ancelle is both too lazy and too busy.

Dear mother, it is time to catch the post.

I had almost forgotten the question of lodgings. Really, dear mother, it is too kind of you to take so much trouble about whether I shall be pleased. Any hole will do, if it be clean!

How could you think I should have such an idea as to take the rooms of someone who had died. You must think me quite incapable of feeling. I should be most ungrateful if I were not completely satisfied with no matter how little.

Yet, to tell the truth, for two months now I have had a question at the end of my pen which I have not dared formulate: *Can I see the sea from my window?* If it is not possible, I shall resign myself very calmly.

Should I buy some shelves for my books?

Dearly loved mother, doubtless you expected quite other explosions of joy than these. But I shall express my gratitude when I see you, which will be worth more; but the very best way of showing it to you will be to succeed in my plans.

One more word, which, too, has its importance. I insist very much on the necessity there is for me to clear up everything *all at once*, and so avoid all waste of time; so that I can act rapidly, and of *myself*.

I do not want to render accounts to Ancelle. As for you, that is another question; I shall for you, if you want them. That is just.

I embrace you with all my heart, and shall see you soon.

Charles.

Saturday 27th February, 1858.

I have had three days of intense joy; and joy is always to the good, it is so rare: and again, thank you sincerely. But after all it was only a lovely dream. I have not given up the idea of going to Honfleur. My desire will grow day by day. But I shall go with my own money and when I have been able to extricate myself from this business.

I beg you, dear mother, not to be cross. I shall certainly join you, but when, I do not know. I shall do all I possibly can to bring it about. Your ill-omened letter arrived to-day, so the letter I sent you with its minute explanations is made null.

I must instantly provide for the complications into which I am on the point of being plunged. They are worse than ever. For, I have, as I told you, made appointments with several people for this very week, and, on the other hand, have refused a sum of money that was offered me. It is enough to make one lose one's head.

But however fearful all this is, there is worse to come. Ancelle, to whom you have doubtless already written, is coming to destroy me with offers of his services, and when he sees that I refuse his money he will want to serve me despite myself. He will wear me out with his odious conversation. I need repose so much. He will force himself in, want to force his way into my affairs, by force tear from me the story of my difficulties. Only to think of his visit turns my suffering into wrath. Seeing my resolution to refuse everything, he will try to do me as much harm as possible, always, of course, on the pretext of being useful. I cannot escape from Paris to avoid him, the remedy would be worse than the evil. He will

force himself into my affairs, as he did into the hearing of my trial. By force he entered into conversation with my friends, whom he did not in the least know; such is his madness to make friends and interfere in everything. Some of them asked who the big fellow was who seemed to know me so well. I am always terrified he may compromise me or make me look ridiculous. There you have an adequate account of his manners.

Therefore I humbly beg you if you have not written to him, do not write at all; if you have written, write again to tell him that your resolution and our agreements are to be taken as not having been made. I want to live, and I will not have this scourge of an Ancelle steal my time and my peace —my *peace!*

I must try to wear myself out with work. Let come what may! I will let you know as and how my project advances, if it does advance.

I implore you, my dear mother, have no anger against me for preferring my own hell to an intervention which has always proved ruinous to me. A usurer would have been better, but is too late now.

I hope I can rely on you to ensure Ancelle from interfering in any way. *In refusing his money I have the right to refuse his help.*

I have never had any very severe quarrel with him, and I have never insulted him. That might happen, however, and I should be ashamed and wretched; but the harm would have been done.

Think that one of my greatest pleasures, in going to Honfleur, was to get away from him.

I embrace you tenderly.

Charles.

You did not reflect either, when you presumed I would accept his intervention, that I should lose an immense amount of time and that to come to an understanding

with him, at least fifty journeys would be necessary.

See what a flood of misery you have poured over me in simply meaning to be pleasant. I have just read over your letter, and I see that the evil is already done and that Ancelle must have heard from you this morning, at the same time as I did. To ward off his blow, I shall write him that I am remaining in Paris, and that I have no *need of money*. Thus, maybe, he will leave me alone.

And now I renew the promise I made you, to do everything possible to join you the soonest possible.

I reopen my letter a third time for two reasons. I know you will be hurt by reading all this; I conjure you to have no ill-will against me. I know what I am doing. I know that what I say is sensible. I know I am right in preferring the more severe torment to the weariness of seeing Ancelle.

I swear that I will do all I can to get to Honfleur, and to manage without him. The letter I am writing you is most sincere and very direct. All these changes hurt me. Let us leave the matter there then, and believe that sorrow and pain alter in no wise my good resolutions.

* * * *

I add still two more words.

I shall take five very full days and leave the 6th, arrive at Havre the 7th, and Honfleur the 8th, Pentecost.

My next letter will refer only to mental matters, only too melancholy, alas!

Plus an account of my projects to get out of my difficulties.

All that I have to produce will pay my actual debts here from now to the end of the year, including yours and the overdraft. But what a dog's life!

As to my income, devoured for this year, I have decided to leave it alone, and let it capitalise itself indefinitely, *even if there be no more "conseil judiciaire."* I have an intolerable fear of poverty.

I must make an income of 6,000 francs for myself. I embrace you.

C. B.

Friday 5th March, 1858.

My dear mother, I ask your pardon for writing briefly and categorically. I have just left M. Jaquotot, and this letter may be considered a resumé of my conversation with him.

I shall rapidly go through the affair.

Eleven days ago, my mother lends me a sum sufficient for me to join her.

Ancelle *requests* that the sum be not remitted (*by the way, that is treachery*).

I refuse everything.

In the meantime, Ancelle behaves in such a manner as to make my resolution still more firm.

M. Jaquotot intervenes, and suggests taking the place of M. Ancelle.

Now we ask: Where is the money?

It exists in the form of a bond which Ancelle is charged to sell.

But what has Ancelle done for eleven days?

He paid a visit to the hotel. What visit!

I wagered with M. Jaquotot that Ancelle had done nothing at all, had sold nothing, was ready to do nothing, which is explained, however, by his resolution to *pay nothing, and to give nothing.*

Another question: Had Ancelle a power to sell the bond?

If he has not, it should be sent at once to M. Jaquotot.

M. Jaquotot thinks with you that silence should cover my personal quarrel with Ancelle, whose distance from Paris, and many occupations at the town hall, sufficiently explain why a friend of the family living near me should take up the matter in his place. And during all this, you dig up again the memory of the quarrel. For my part, I kept my promise.

I avoided all relation with Ancelle, in the fear of making things worse or of being carried to the point of violence.

I have lost eleven days.

That is not all.

The prosecutions, which I had held off by my promises, are about to begin all over again, the costs will naturally increase, and the money destined to establish our peace at Honfleur, and make my purchases, will be in consequence *diminished.*

I pass over in silence certain things which only concern my personal sufferings; I lack everything, I do nothing, and I live in expectation.

I have, all said and done, kept my promise.

M. Jaquotot, who passionately loves his own liberty, has consented to give up some time to my affairs, for the pleasure of seeing me with you.

Ancelle, according to what you have said, has himself offered to give up to another the care of this business.

Where, then, is the difficulty now?

And why is the money not in the hands of M. Jaquotot?

Ancelle ought to thank us all for ridding him of the bother.

M. Jaquotot cannot take on the reconstitution of my income. He is not the *conseil judiciare.* For the moment it would be usurping another's functions, *as now it would be a usurpation of function for Ancelle to oppose a gift or loan offered to me.* Ancelle, therefore, must reconstitute that income.

The rest of my letter has no connection with our present affairs; I only send you these lines, therefore, as matter for future reflection.

M. Jaquotot put several embarrassing questions.

"How have you lived for the last fourteen years?"

"I lived on the money due to me from Ancelle, and in difficult straits, on my mother's permission to overstep my

income, a generosity which, however, proved useless, seeing how the money was given me; and only in the last years have I been able to increase my income by my work."

"How much do you owe?"

"At least thirty thousand francs."

"At the moment when the family met, how much did you owe?"

"Fifteen or twenty thousand francs."

"Since your debts are of two kinds, why were the debts made before the family meeting left unpaid, and why, in order to make good the loss, did not Ancelle make the remains of your fortune yield better results?"

"I cannot tell; I have accused Ancelle too much, I do not wish to accuse him further. Besides, I have only accused his intelligence."

"Have you ever thought of the need of convoking another family council, or of applying for another *conseil?*"

"Yes. I have myself sometimes menaced Ancelle I should do so; but my indolence and my hatred of business got the better of me. Besides, *at the present moment,* and such is my mother's opinion, as, indeed, my own, I ought to do the utmost to avoid such a conflict."

I have finished. This last page of my letter, dealing with the task incumbent on Ancelle in 1844, must remain secret between us.

But remember one thing: that is, that every day lost increases my suffering and my difficulties. Without the promise you made me, eleven days ago, I might at least have lived and given up my time to the paying of certain small debts. But you will again say that I am accusing you, while I but try to call your attention to the necessity of reasoning sensibly.

I embrace you with all my heart. Deliver me with all speed.

Charles.

M. Jaquotot* and I have so gone into everything, that if the Charles' principal and my purchases are paid and there still remains something unpaid for, I should leave money with him to that end.

Saturday 6th March, 1858.

Well, my poor mother, the great secret is out. Originally it was Ancelle who lent me the 3,000 francs. Then it was you. . . . Now it is neither you nor him; it is I who sell a bond by authority of Ancelle, and that is why he is so strong, and can laugh at us all.

You delivered me up to him, and you gave up your own will, too.

I have not written to him. But to-morrow I shall go to him. I shall be calm. I shall insist on the necessity of depositing the money with M. Jaquotot. As to that, I am absolutely firm, and for once I hope that you will not give in.

I write in M. Jaquotot's house.

The idea of asking him to ask Ancelle for permission to intervene must be given up. You do not realise that the shameful thing you force upon me you have no right to ask of another man. M. Jaquotot puts his devotion at our service, but he has no pardon to beg from the old madman.

I uphold absolutely all I have said and all I demand.

The money must be with M. Jaquotot if you want me to visit you.

And why must I make the visit?

To what end?

I hope no evil comes of it.

I embrace you.

Charles.

Thursday 13th May, 1858.

I have never known such a faculty for inventing alarms. And what a strange idea to sermonise me that it is in my

* *M. Jaquotot formed part of the family council which met in 1844.*

interest to rejoin you! I know it well! but I am moved by higher claims.

I have never changed my idea, so you must not sign your letter, *your poor mother*, nor reproach me that I wrote to you at length when I was distressed and that I never write to you now I am not. All that, dear mother, is equally unjust.

I am always most uneasy and I have never changed my mind.

I was wrong not to keep you informed as and how I went on, and above all I was wrong in not leaving for Honfleur immediately on my return from Corbeil. I should have been obliged, it is true, to return to Paris for three or four days on the publication of my volume; but in return I should have begun that quiet life of peace to which I aspire with all my heart.

There, in two words, is the explanation of my delay.

That volume, and its sale, naturally kept me here for several days. . . .

13th June, 1858.

But, my dear little mother, you are mad; it is I who owe you forty thousand excuses for my strange conduct, comprehensible to myself alone, and a thousand thanks for your indulgence. Only, if I wrong you, confess that you always write like a happy person, without cares, one who can give all her time to her friends. Yet you know that my fate has been a cruel one. Miracles are needed and I shall perform them. How could you not guess that for three months now I had allowed myself to be circumscribed by new difficulties of money? Only, admire me! This time I shall extricate myself all alone and without borrowing a penny.

All I told you relative to future contracts, to offers made me, is literally true. If my first fragment in the *Revue contemporaine* was held up, it was solely because I wished it so; I wanted to revise, re-read, change and correct it.

Really, this time, seriously, you will, in a few days, receive

the first earnest of my moving, as I hate having even one trunk with me. I shall first send the books; you can arrange them neatly in the room you mean me to have.

I shall write to you again and I embrace you.

Charles.

Don't bother about the Jaquotot's; anyhow, they're away.

Sunday 22nd August, 1858.

Dear mother, do not, I beg you, read my letter as ridiculous or exaggerated; take it simply as a form of weakness, if you like, and in any case, it is a proof that I often think of you. For several days I have been dreaming of you, and, to be candid, the dreams are unpleasant ones. But in the last you were ill and I saw myself nursing you. The total result is that I now feel *completely upset.* Therefore, write me tomorrow, *Monday,* so that I can have your letter *Tuesday,* and tell me if *you are well.*

Now, if you want to scold me, please keep it till later. I could not bear it just now.

I shall write another time to tell you what I have done and what I am doing.

And the 15th of August has gone by and no decoration come. I do not know if I told you that there was talk of it last year, but that the trial of the *Fleurs du Mal* threw it aside for later. However, to speak quite frankly, the recent nominations seem to me so unpleasant that I am enchanted not to have been flung into the batch and most of all this one.

Goodbye. I do love you.

Charles.

11*th December,* 1858.

My dear mother, I send you another parcel, for all these delays do not mean that I have changed my purpose.

Do not write to me, or if you do, write to 22, Rue Beautreillis. But it is just possible I may be in Alençon when your letter arrives.

To-morrow I move my last things from the Hôtel Voltaire.

I have still four more lots to send off to you and shall box or case them after my very short stay in Alençon.

My *Opium* causes me an infinity of worry. I am obsessed by an idea that I have created something really detestable. What is the good of learning to distinguish the various poisons if I cannot get more talent out of them.

You received *L'Amour* of Michelet, an *immense success,* of women; I have not read it and I think I am right in guessing it to be nasty.

Fanny, immense success, nasty book, utterly objectionable.

As for the *Sonnets humoristiques,* that book is delightful.

If I have a little money left I shall bring you some presents.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

10 *October,* 1859.*

This may interest you.

Keep it, like all the other things I send you.

The end of the *Salon* I sent you is only a proof and has not yet appeared; the little review is dead.

I have been in fearful difficulties.

As for myself, all is well, in spite of deep sadness.

The theatre is a quite new occupation for me. The two first acts go well; but I have never been able to go further.

Think if you can, that when I do not write, it is only because I am *discontented with myself.*

You really might have sent me a little thank-you for the poor proofs I sent you in sympathy for your boredom.

You asked for the *Revue contemporaine.* Did you get it? It appears on the 1st and the 15th. If by chance it was forgotten, write to me complaining (if it was addressed in my name rather than in yours, it is because, by that means, as a writer, I pay only half price). Did you get *La Legende des*

** Baudelaire had just spent almost six consecutive months at Honfleur, January to July.*

Siècles, a fine book, which has just appeared? This Victor Hugo is indefatigable.

Les Païens Innocents?

The *Balzac* of Théophile Gautier?

Le Marmont?

A critical book by Montégut?

And my proofs?

I embrace you with all my heart.

Your idea of praying God to help me in my theatrical affairs is very comical; but everything you do is always right.

C. B.

What an extraordinary imagination you have!

I had to succeed in understanding, or rather in divining through your awful explanations:

1. That you did not enquire what kind of document it was.
2. That you did not ask (after having said I was away) for the banker's address.

Then, what a strange idea to think that the bank would be so refined as to guess that it would upset your nerves to ask you for a signature in my absence!

For, to suppose that anybody could draw a bill on me by advising the banker to demand your acceptance is a dream, sheer madness.

A bill is never presented until it falls due, therefore this could not be a bill. Besides, you would have known my handwriting.

A month before it falls due, someone calls and demands my signature, or, in my absence, yours. That is the precaution they take to know if I accept, if I recognise, the document as valid. They have no right to ask for yours. As to the precaution that is so rarely taken, and then only in the case of *drafts*, I cannot reproach the banker, for it might be that someone to whom I owed nothing might take it into his head to draw a draft on me.

Therefore, it must be a draft.

Enclosed is my acceptance and I do not enclose it in an

envelope, so that the postage stamp may guarantee its authenticity. You must have it sent to the banker, whose address you did not send me.

Really, my dear mother, all that might have made me laugh, if I had not guessed that in your usual way you were hammering away in the sincerest manner.

Except *Machiavel and Condorcet*, which is not even begun, but which I shall do at Honfleur, all the works announced on the back of my pamphlet* are *finished*, and will appear next year, month by month, a volume a month.

The *Notices littéraires* are finished. *Eureka* is finished.

Etc., etc.

I did not send you the numbers of the *Revue de Genève* because the work they are printing (Eureka) would be unintelligible to you, and also it has become still more difficult through the abominable printing errors of those idiots.

The rearrangement of my two rooms much disquiets me. But I shall see them soon.

I made a mistake, I fear, in the tea I sent you. I feel sure it was a kind other than I had meant.

* *On the back cover of the pamphlet on* Théophile Gautier *is announced:—*

OUVRAGES DU MÊME AUTEUR:
Chez Poulet-Malassis et de Broise.
Sous Presse

LES FLEURS DU MAL, *2nd édit., augmentée d'une préface et de vingt poèmes inédits:* *1 vol.*
OPIUM ET HASCHISCH: *ou l'Idéal artificiel:* *1 vol.*
CURIOSITÉS ESTHÉTIQUES: *1 vol.*

En Préparation.

NOTICES LITTÉRAIRES: *1 vol.*
MACHIAVEL ET CONDORCET, *dialogue philosophique:* *1 vol.*

CHEZ MICHEL LÉVY.

Traduction des œuvres d'Edgar Poe.
HISTOIRES EXTRAORDINAIRES: *1 vol.*
NOUVELLES HISTOIRES EXTRAORDINAIRES: *1 vol.*
AVENTURES D'ARTHUR GORDON PYM: *1 vol.*

En Préparation.

EUREKA: *1 vol.*

Are you pleased with the pamphlet? I do not mean as regards myself. I mean its format as made by Malassis, its type and paper.

My debt Malassis will clear up. Thus, out of five works announced, there are four which belong to him for an edition of 1,100 copies, and which will diminish my debt by at least 1,200 francs.

I embrace you and implore you not to invent any more monstrosities.

C. B.

1*st November*, 1859.

Doubtless I shall soon write you minutely in regard to my affairs, and I even believe that I shall have good news for you.

As to the tea, you are mistaken; I only sent you a sample; it is a tea with a *great reputation*, but should not be mixed with *inferior* kinds of tea as a flavouring, only used *pure*. So according to what you say I shall know *if it is as good as they say*.

Be positive that I could not be so cruel as to let you spend the winter alone.

I thank you most heartily for the ardent curiosity you show in my affairs. I am now convinced that if I was so often miserable it was largely through my own fault. If only I have health and *patience* enough to prove my worth.

The word you could not read was *tea*. It seems there is also another kind, but that is 600 francs a pound. What on earth can it be? Perhaps it was a joke to excite my curiosity? That I sent you was fairly cheap (48 francs the kilo, 30 francs the pound), and is called caravan tea, and according to my friends is sometimes good, sometimes bad. Then, the shopkeeper himself may have made a mistake. According to what you say I shall decide whether to buy more of the same kind.

Before I leave Paris I will take care to find out the exact

address of the merchant who sells Oriental mats and straw things, and ask his prices.

Now I have certain recommendations to make to you.

My WRAPPERS *and* PAPERS *must absolutely stay as I left them.* I am in a state of terror of the fearful stupidity of servants.

There is only one wall (where my room looks on the courtyard) on which nothing must ever hang, because of the damp.

You must be most careful to save up, and not *destroy,* all I send you in connection with literature: pamphlets, reviews, newspapers, *proofs,* for I often find I have no copy. Thus I have no copy of my *Salon* (the last articles having gone to Honfleur since I left, some finished and sewn, the final one in *proof*), nor of my verses in *La Contemporaine,* etc.

Lastly, you must look on the right-hand of my book shelves, where the bound books are, and search out a very small book (*Bertram,* by Maturin, in English) and another larger book (*Bertram,* by *Maturin,* translated into French by Taylor and Nodier).

You must put (not in an envelope) in a wrapper almost large enough to cover it completely, each of these books; that will cost you much less than posting them as *letters;* and you must send them to the Hôtel de Dieppe. (Be careful not to slip a letter in, you will have us both prosecuted.) Your servant must be intelligent enough to post them as PRINTED MATTER.

And now, I embrace you with all my heart and thank you.

Charles.

Despite your failing sight, you will, I know, be kind enough to put back all the other books in their places, without crumpling the pages. Forgive this last recommendation.

Dear mother, you always reason wrongly. My life is so complicated, so overwhelmed and tormented, that for several days now I have been unable to find an hour to write or thank you.

Your great kindness has somewhat raised my spirits. That is the principal thing, is it not?

To-morrow I shall tell you the story of your shawl.

Here is your Peckao-Souchong, to beg my pardon for the Shakespeare you called *magnificent*, in *irony*. But you were right in guessing that it was not the Shakespeare I chose so long ago. If I had bought that one, I should not have been able to buy shirts and other indispensable things. This one is frightful, and perhaps too refined.

Another thing, I was confounded, dazzled, by your devotion. But it did me much good. I was wrong in not wanting to reply to you until I should be a little more satisfied with myself, unfortunately that is still not so.

What is evidently needed, to bring my affairs to a successful issue, is more virtue, more resignation and more courage than I have.

I embrace you not only with tenderness, but with admiration.

Ch. Baudelaire.

8th December, 1859.

You are really too harsh, my dear mother, and you torment me very much. Did you not say to me latterly that I forced you to *make* a stand (your own expression) with regard to the meeting of my bills, and that my friend Malassis, who lent me 4,000 francs without the knowledge of his brother-in-law or his mother, and who was the first to dare risk prosecution for my sake, smelt of usury? I cannot always send you long letters, what with my many occupations and the long journeys, for which I cannot always take a carriage. You tell me you are upset about the 1,000 francs I have to pay. Think, then, what I have endured for eighteen years.

I remain in Paris because my play is bad, and because I must plan it over again, and because I do not wish to return to Honfleur until I have signed my contract with the *Circus*

and borrowed 3,000 francs from the people whose business it is to make advances on such work.

The volumes *Notices littéraires* is finished. The volume *Fleurs du Mal* is almost finished. The volume *Opium et Haschisch* will be finished the day after to-morrow. The volume *Curiosités esthétiques* will be finished the end of the month. *Eureka* (the fourth volume) of Poe will be finished in a week. At Honfleur I shall do the *Machiavel et Condorcet,* which will keep me busy a long time.

You still seem to forget that I, the prodigal, am now transformed into a mentor and sister of charity.

I shall write again. I embrace you and I thank you for all the cares you give to my little nest.

You will receive (by rail or post) the 1,000 francs on the 11th.

You see I do not waste my time.

C. B.

15th December, 1859.

You are too, too, generous. I do not yet know if I shall accept or refuse; it will depend on my financial situation at the end of the month. Three months ago I had some very fine new clothes made here; but naturally they wear out more rapidly than at Honfleur. And besides, I ought to take into account that in seventeen years you gave or lent me many thousands of francs, and it is fully time, not only not to go on borrowing from you, but also to repay you.

(You forgot to tell me in your letter that you received (doubtless) 500 francs from Alençon to pay the 15th. Yet I hoped that to-day my agitated mind might grow calmer.)

Calonne still has some of my new poems; I believe they will be found pretty strange. But on the 31st only prose will appear; the first part only of my *Opium;* it is too long to appear all in one number.

All that you find obscure, was nevertheless easy to guess. On Saturday I needed 200 francs, pay day being Monday.

I remembered too late that on Sunday courts and banks are closed. *I remember now that the law concedes a debtor till noon of the following day.* So I wrote Troussel, asking him to *let you know, so as to set your mind at rest,* that I am sending him the excess, not by rail but in a *registered letter,* so that it shall reach him *before noon.* As for the June bill of exchange, that is equally simple. Very stupidly I left a bill with Troussel, although it had *been paid,* about the time I was hoping to get back to Honfleur in a few days. That was most imprudent, for if someone were to find it (some successor to Troussel, for example) he could have demanded its payment a second time. So I took advantage of the occasion to tell him to send it to you.

I have been given some superb engravings and magnificent watercolours. I might use them to decorate my rooms. Among the watercolours (by a very strange man, a friend of Préziosi, but much superior*), are subjects of Turkish life which I destine for you. I will also arrange to bring the two heads by Greuze.

Goodbye. I embrace you.

Charles.

Wednesday 28th December, 1859.

Though you have written nothing to me, I presume you were pleased with the presents. You are the first person to whom I have been able, this year, to discharge that duty. And this drawing is the only oriental fragment I could tear from that strange man, on whom I shall write a long article (the last fragment of those which will make up the *Curiosités esthétiques*).

There is nothing new. There was a slight accident which you will find very disagreeable. Yesterday and the day before, I so much corrected my *Opium* that the printers cannot get it out before the 30th. Thus everything is put

* *Constantin Guys. The donor may have been M. Gautier. In his biographical study he notes: We had about sixty sketches, drawings, water-colours, of which we gave same to the poet.*

off to the 15th. Anyhow, I think the fragment will be interesting. M. Malassis is in Paris and we have agreed to publish a volume a month, from February. Thus we shall commence printing the first volume in January. We shall print at the same time as the *Revue*. The flowers, decorations and frontispiece for *Les Flęurs* (second edition) are ordered. All the proof correcting will be done at Honfleur. I am therefore sure now of publishing five volumes next year. Please God! that may have a good effect on my morale. For as to money, it is to other things I must look. The difficulties with Michel Lévy will be straightened later, for the volume of *Notices littéraires* will be the last. The traveller for Malassis who has just got back, assures me that everyone is asking for the second edition of the *Fleurs*.

All I am waiting for now before returning is the decision of the new manager on my new plot. I have every reason to hope it will be favourable. There is a great sum involved in this first decision.

I am oppressed by a host of solemn and deeply serious thoughts. But this year has been less stupidly employed than past years, though I have done hardly a quarter of what I mean to do in the next. If I should grow infirm, or feel my brain decay, before I had done all I feel I ought and must do!

I beg you, write me you are well, that you love me, and that you are confident in my destiny.

Now, dear mother, one more great service. The 200 francs you offered (*which I shall repay you with 60 others as soon as my last arrangements are made*), send to me, I beg you, in a letter sealed with five seals, and declared at the post, with the amount both *written in full* and in *figures* on the envelope. It will reach me on the 30th and I shall make the following use of it.

Half of it as you intend. I shall buy some ready-made things, handkerchiefs, socks and shirts. It is *fearfully urgent;* I lack EVERYTHING, and I must not count as adequate what

I left at Honfleur, though my clothes, those I had made in Paris in the autumn, are still quite passable. If, as I believe, I shall get a good sum, either from Geneva or through the Manager of the Cirque, I shall increase my wardrobe before leaving.

The other half will be used in presents for the servants of the hotel, and in such houses as I move familiarly in, and where I dine endlessly. Then I shall be as proud as anyone and no one will guess my poverty.

As for your rubbers, were I richer even, never; they are both ugly and dangerous.

Anyhow, shoes, ties, etc., the 200 francs will be enough.

I embrace you with all my heart, and, though I have some vague hope of glory, I am very sad.

I have written a deal of verse, but now stop, first because there are more urgent and profitable things which await conclusion, and then because this fecundity would never come to an end, and then because I left at Honfleur three pieces just begun, which I shall finish there, as well as the Preface (an important matter) which must be written so as not to offer a target to the malevolence of the law, which is so stupid and so evil.

Do not hesitate to say (if such is your opinion) that you find the Turkish lady very ugly. I do not believe the fine arts are your strong point, but that does not in any way diminish my love and my respect for you.

Charles.

Do not decide suddenly to send me what remains of my linen *at Honfleur*. I shall be here so short a while that it is not worth the trouble, and it would burden me with an extra packet for my return. Besides, I should still have to buy some things, and there is so little choice, and things are so badly made at Honfleur. And then I should have so much, and my passion to travel without luggage is so strong, that if I had too many clothes I would sell them, and also think of all the portfolios of drawings and pictures.

Sunday 15th January, 1860.

The day before yesterday I had a very strange attack. I was out, and almost fasting. I think I must have had something like congestion of the brain. A good old woman relieved me by very strange means. But after I was relieved there was another attack. Nausea and such weakness accompanied by dizziness that I could not climb one step even without thinking I was going to faint. After some hours, it all passed away. I got home last night I am perfectly well, but as tired as if I had made a long voyage.

I embrace you. I beg you to believe that it was in no way my fault. I shall write again the day after to-morrow.

Charles.

There was one comic detail in this wretched adventure; never for one instant did I lose my reason, yet I was bothered by the idea that people would think me intoxicated.

4th March, 1860.

My dear mother, you must have been very astonished I did not thank you by return. This is why. First, you must know something that you probably never guessed, that is, that you inspire me with a great fear. Now, I asked you to arrange it so that everything fell upon me here in Paris, at the hotel; and then, not to write scolding me until some days had passed and my affairs were in better order. Judge of my astonishment and confusion when I received two letters from you one immediately after the other. For a long time I let them burn my pocket and only lately did I find courage enough to read them. My first sensation was one of *immense astonishment,* and the second *of immense shame.* My gratitude for so much devotion and generosity only came later. That is not to say that the sick pride with which my wretched existence has filled me speaks before my heart; it was because I was utterly bewildered.

Here is a note of the sums I want to send back to you together or in fragments:

60
200 New Year's Day.
337
200

797.

without reckoning the immense arrears.

Four days have now gone by and nothing I expected has happened. My nerves are upset and I cannot work. I curse, I stay in, I am bored. I know well that it would be most courageous to assume that the sums I expect will never come, and to start to work all day for *La Presse*, but I am half ill. . . .

26th March 1860.

Well, my dear mother, I must again afflict you. To-morrow, 27th, and April 1st, there will be two new bills which will fall due at Honfleur (THE LAST; since your prohibition I have made no others). I DO NOT WANT, even if you did, for you to bleed yourself for me. It is an *absolutely sincere prayer* I address to you, *I do not want,* I cannot, without a shudder, think of what you recently wrote me. *Charles, though you are kind, though you are able to earn money, I fear you will ruin me.* You know now that when the delay is only three or four days there can be no scandal. *I give you my word of honour that I have not used either the* 400 *francs or the* 500 *that I have expected for two months.* But this time the money will come from a more serious place, *La Presse.* I shall write to you without fail the day after to-morrow to reassure you. Take careful note of the name and address of the bailiff or of the person who holds the document in question. I have arranged with *La Presse* to be always paid before publication.

I implore you most ardently, be indulgent; remember the intense pain I suffer and how sick my spirit is. Do not

send me yet another torrent of those reproaches which do me so much harm, me whom you consider insensitive; and then, too, I do not wish you to have pains in the stomach or insomnia. For this three months' squall will soon be over. You cannot think the anguish you cause me in writing as you do. I begin to tremble, and then, either for fear of your reproaches, or of hearing bad news of your health, I dare not open your letters. Before a letter I cannot be brave.

If you knew on what thoughts I feed, the fear of dying before having done what I have to do, the fear of your dying before I have made you completely happy, you, the one being with whom I can live at peace, without tricks, without lies; the agony of my *"conseil judiciaire"* (I must utter the word), which tortures me day and night; finally, and this is perhaps worse than the rest, the fear of never being able to cure myself of my vices. Such are my usual thoughts. And my awaking, mornings, to confront those sad realities; my name, my poverty, etc.!

I have come to a final decision; after the first week in April, that is to say, Easter, or after Easter, whether I have or have not finished what remains to be done, whether I have or have not settled the question of the play (for I am determined to), whether I have or have not your 800 francs in pocket, I shall leave. And then I shall be, not happy, that is impossible, but sufficiently tranquil to devote all my days to work, and all my evenings to pleasing you and attending on you.

Did you get a letter (very short) in which I spoke of your shawl, and the same day a packet of tea, which is, I think, the *kind* you wanted? As for your shawl, I was so moved, so touched, that I could never resign myself to selling it; I pawned it, expecting to redeem it later, and with the money advanced on it (250 francs) bought a complete outfit.

This is the beginning of a series of critical articles, *all*

finished, which will be included later in my fourth volume for Malassis. You will receive in succession eight galley proofs like this.

There will doubtless appear shortly some new poems of mine in the *Revue contemporaine* for April 1st. In the *Presse* nine or ten articles on the fine arts will also appear.

Goodbye. I shall not be able without sadness, to think, to-morrow morning at nine, that you are reading my letter.

Charles.

Les Paradis is being printed. And then will come *les Fleurs.*

My dear mother, for four days I have been walking the streets of Paris to find 100 francs, outside the 300. If you still have them, send them to me at once in a registered letter. I say if you still have them, because while I was relying on *Le Constitutionelle* for the 300 francs due on the 12th, it may be that Cousinet* has written again to Honfleur for the 300 francs, in which case, so much the worse for me.

In the contrary event, I mean if you have not sent the 100 francs to Cousinet, I shall use them for myself, and remain responsible, in Paris, for the 300 francs. I am sure that this last sum will finally clear up most of the difficulties.

At the end of this week *les Paradis artificiels* will appear. I must go on at once to the second volume (*les Fleurs*) and then I shall go to *Honfleur* for three days to work and look through my files, for you could not, I fear, find me what I need. (What a ghastly way of working, always surrounded by innumerable worries. At every line I find myself stopping to think of my fearful destiny!)

There are now no more bills at Honfleur. I have an exact account of all I had from you since January, 1859.

Try not to receive me too unkindly, for once you received me very harshly.

**Cousinet kept a restaurant in the Rue de Bac, which was frequented by men of letters. There is mention of him particularly in the letters of Barbey d'Aurevilly to Baudelaire.*

As soon as the manuscript of the *Fleurs* is ready and sent to Alençon (in eight days) I shall return to Honfleur, and there await the decision of the Cirque Theatre.

I embrace you and beg a thousand pardons for having too often troubled your repose.

Charles.

My clothes are quite adequate.

[18*th May*, 1860.]

I told you I was about to leave, for I hoped to leave with someone 6,000 francs for the payment of my debts; but not being able to pay them, except little by little, and my presence being necessary, I remained. 4,000 francs are already paid.

And then the publication of the book. You know of it, since you have received your copy. And you know also how very serious a matter is the distribution of a book. It is like the distribution of invitations for a first performance. Judge of my difficulties. I needed 130 copies, but was only sent 60.

I think I am about to have some days of respite. I shall bring you a little money and a *magnificent* book you have never read. No more had I. It is *Les Penseés et les Lettres de Joubert,* the friend of Chateaubriand.

You are wrong to worry about the 300 francs. Marin must have behaved with the utmost honesty. However, I shall see him soon.

My book is altered and enlarged.

Are you well? For me, that is the most important thing, I mean, *your being well.*

I embrace you.

Charles.

I am terribly afraid of my book being a *fiasco.* And when I think I must add four more this year!

Saturday (4*th August*, 1860).

If I write to you to-day it is only to say, and repeat,

how uneasy I am as to the effect my letter will have on you. The more I think of it, the more I fear I have hurt you. This uneasiness is as intense now as my feeling of impotence that I cannot repair the evil I have done, and therefore I must seem the most dishonest of men.

Perhaps you think the idea of calling the worthy Abbé in in advance, so as to distract your sadness, was indiscreet or even silly.* What would you have me say, except that I lost my head and, knowing so well the fluctuations in your health, thought only of finding some means of lessening your pain? That idea, truly, came from the most natural and most filial intention.

My stomach and my sleep continue to be in a quite abominable condition.

Charles.

7th August, 1860.

Now doubtless, my dear mother, we shall have much care and confusion, one upon the other. As to the lady you refer to it is a temporary bother from which you may possibly derive some pleasure. As for me, who mean most certainly to come to you on the 15th at the latest, it will be one difficulty the more in all the turmoil. As for the landslide, that is more serious. I have devoured a frightful amount of your money for two years and a half, and it would be heartbreaking if those accidents kept on recurring every time the weather was bad enough to bring about such ravages. And then your maisonette, now a pleasure to you, would be the pitcher of the Danaides as to money.

I read your letter very attentively and *I will always remember* your predisposition to irremediable crises.

As for me, you must not be uneasy, except as to the thing

* *The following letter explains why. Baudelaire had confessed the fault committed, then, fearful of the effect of his confession, had sent the Abbé Cardinne to see his mother.*

you know of; no doubt, I am horribly dissatisfied with my health, but the body would be well if the soul were well. My soul will never get well. These wretched vomitings of which I so often speak are habitual now, even fasting, even when I am not angry, or fearful or upset. The worst of it all is that nothing amuses me, and that I feel my will and my capacity for *hoping* much weakened.

I am by no means rid of my worries. Yesterday morning, on receipt of the announcement of my deliverance, my first care was to write to M. Ancelle thus: "You will receive this morning a letter from my mother about a matter of urgent need. I have a signature to give you, and besides, a letter addressed to the persons for whom the money is intended. We may possibly have to go together to the Exchange, or the Bank or a money-changer. If your day is planned out, I have no right to upset it; but I live opposite the railway whose other station is at your door, and I shall stay at home for you on the 7th and 8th up to five o'clock."

Now it is half-past one, and no Ancelle; and I am again afraid. The money must be paid the 9th and to-morrow is the 8th.

I cannot possibly think that he would oppose a letter from you; but, since he considers that *nothing matters,* and that everything can be arranged by eloquence and *time,* he might well produce a catastrophe. On the other hand, I know that with a banker or money-changer, every operation requires at least twenty-four hours. I should have liked to do a little work before leaving Paris. There is an absolute connection between the two ideas; the reparation of my fault, and a certain amount of calm for work.

Once more I express all my gratitude and all my regrets. But what I have done must not be exaggerated; it was monstrous as a piece of stupidity, *but I had done it so often before without mischance,* and not for an instant did it

occur to me to misuse the money, or abandon myself to chance as to the means of replacing it.

I embrace you a thousand times.

Charles.

Tuesday Night, 7th August. 11 *o'clock.*

As by seven o'clock I had heard nothing from M. Ancelle, *not even by letter,* I hurried to Neuilly; he had gone out after his dinner, and I waited in the avenue until half-past ten, expecting his return. Then I went back to Paris. To-morrow morning at 7, I shall return to his house, and I think with annoyance that I shall have to talk, discuss, fight his curiosity, seize him, put him in a carriage, and literally drag him about.

And yet, if even all that is impossible, what will become of me? The 10th would still not have been too late, but for that the business must be completed to-morrow, the 8th. And supposing that it is done, I must add the fatigue of watching him until he has deposited the money in the place where it should have been deposited long ago.

It is certain that as it was I who precipitated myself into this very serious situation, I have no right (before you) to complain so bitterly, yet all the same I cannot help thinking that, having sometimes shown certain virtues in regard to him, I have a right to expect some devotion; and besides that we both received your letters yesterday morning at 8 and that two days have passed. My life is always suspended on the whim of that lubber. Ah! how disgusted I am, and have been for so many years, by the necessity of living twenty-four hours day after day! When shall I live with pleasure?

I embrace you very lovingly and thank you for what you have done for me.

But what can one do?

C. B.

Does he know the exact figure?
Does he know that the date is the 9th?

(21*st August*, 1860.)

I was in need of 300 francs to leave and de Calonne gave them me. A creditor tore them from me. I then asked Malassis, who was very anxious to see me, for the 300 francs. He sent them me, but another creditor tore them from me. I shall ask the *Constitutionnel* for them, but there they are furious with me. Yet I know they will give them me.

I shall die having done nothing with my life. I owed 20,000 francs; I owe 40,000. If I am so unhappy as to live much longer, the debt might even double itself again.

For several months now I have been ill with an illness which cannot be cured; cowardice, enfeeblement. It is complicated physically by bad nights and anguish, sometimes fear, sometimes rage.

To add to my misery and disgust, I have made you ill.

I shall call on the *Constitutionnel* in two days.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Ch. Baudelaire.

11*th October*, 1860.

. . . Like an actor, in manner reserved—I sent, in token of hommage and expression of sympathy, my *Paradis* to the excellent M. Cardinne.

I have taken a small flat in Neuilly, so as never to set foot again inside a hotel. I had my furniture, which is in a sad pass, moved into it and confess that I counted on a last favour on your part by means of which to do it up and add a bed, a table, etc.

Yet I am *still at the hotel.*

Les Fleurs du Mal are being printed. A frightful business. It is a book that will always sell, unless the law interferes with it again. I have added thirty-four new poems,

most of which you have seen. The rest will appear in *L'Artiste*. But I am *highly perplexed*. There is a preface in prose, full of a coarse playfulness; I hesitate whether to print it, and yet I shall never tire of insulting France.

I have left M. de Calonne, *at the risk of a law-suit*. M. Buloz has asked me to return to him, even if he has to settle any debts I made with de Calonne (and I did).

It is still a question of that stupid Croix d'honneur. I sincerely hope that the preface to the *Fleurs* will make it for ever impossible. Anyhow, I replied bravely to such of my friends as were suggesting it: "*Twenty years ago* (I know that what I am saying is absurd), I should have been glad. To-day, I want to be an *exception*. Let them decorate every Frenchman, but *not me*. Never will I change my ways or my manner. Instead of the croix, let them give me *money, money*, only *money!* If the croix is worth 500 francs, let them give me 500 francs; if it is not worth more than 20 francs, let them give me 20 francs!" In one word, I replied to the brutes *like a brute*. The more wretched I become, the higher grows my pride.

I embrace you, but very sadly. I love you with all my heart; that you never knew. There is between you and me this radical difference, that I know you by heart, but you have never divined my wretched nature.

Charles.

I read attentively all you said about the crumbling away of the garden. It is too sad; poor maisonette! If I had sufficient strength and the health to survive my torments, I promise not only never to sell it, but never to mortgage it.

You did not even *deign to read attentively* the second part of my last long letter. And yet the suggestions made to you had been carefully measured, meditated, weighed. I refer to the letter where I confessed that my creditors had torn from me some money which had been confided to me by another to a particular end. I embrace you again.

C. B.

3rd November, 1860.

My dear mother, I thought that I had caused you too much torment and uneasiness this year not to owe you some slight tribute for your birthday. I hesitated between a piece of very lovely oriental stuff for a chair and a flower bowl; but then I thought that the stuff would involve you in the expense of a chair. As for a fine porcelain flower bowl, besides it being difficult to find one, they are horribly expensive. Here, then, is a miserable flower bowl in wood, the copper of which is not even gilded. But I know that you put the spirit, I mean the intention, of the gift, above the thing itself.

Here is a very long article which must have given a good deal of trouble to its writer. Anyhow, it is written politely, which in this age of bad manners, is a good deal.*

Nothing new as to the play; I am so full of subjects for books, and the theatre inspires in me such disdain, that I thought, to lessen the work, of finding a collaborator, *the most famous and most stupid* possible. Half the work means half the money. At last I shall soon be able to move in and leave the hotel; but the upholsterer is so slow that I cannot name the exact day.

Ancelle has only put 350 francs at my disposal instead of 900. You can therefore imagine my efforts and artifices to gain my ends. Fortunately, I received a quite unexpected 300 francs. Up to the present, I have managed to pay the hotel 650 out of the 900 francs I owe them.

After having spent some days at Neuilly, and settled myself in, I shall as I said come to stay at Honfleur. But first I will send you a word to let you know when I leave Neuilly. And, *despite everything,* I must work.

I embrace you.

Charles.

* *Presumably that of d'E. Deschanel on Les Paradis artificiels which appeared in the Journal des Débats 12th July, 1860.*

8th December, 1860.

Poor dear mother, I am too busy to reply at length and as I should. I have been tossed from one difficulty to another. Yet, thanks to an unexpected piece of luck, I think I can move in about the 15th (Neuilly, rue Louis Philippe, number 4). I shall stay in it for eight days only and then leave for Honfleur.

I have been the dupe of many people, and overwhelmed by all sorts of mishaps. Before leaving I must take care to arrange in advance to meet my bills, all of which fall due on January 10. Many preoccupations, but little work.

You are right. I feel much diminished and most discouraged. I begin to imagine that the problem of my life is one of those problems I must throw to the dogs.

I shall write to you to-morrow or the day after.

I am sick of the flower bowl. I nearly did much worse. I almost sent you flowered hangings for your boudoir. But that would have increased my debt to the upholsterer by too much.

And the cliff!

I embrace you and I love you.

Charles.

Always rue d'Amsterdam, Hôtel de Dieppe.

1*st January,* 1861.

My dear mother, it is impossible, the first day of a new year, not to have the most sombre thoughts about past years, and not say: Ah! if only this coming year holds some scrap of happiness!

I add: I beg you to do all in your power *to keep well,* and to remain bright and active.

I have now been installed (Rue Louis-Philippe, Neuilly) for a fortnight, and, as usual, am most unhappy. Take the word in a moral rather than a physical sense.

Besides, I have fallen back on my old idea of fixing my-

self absolutely at Honfleur, except for a week every month (for it is not possible to suppress Paris owing to business) and then I should pay my expenses as I incurred them. Because, for reasons I may perhaps explain to you, I shall probably not return to Neuilly.

I did not answer your letter. What could I say? You know how overwhelmed I am with physical and spiritual torments, and how utterly uneasy, and yet you add insult to it all. If at least your insults inspired me with genius!

I implore you, think of the conseil judiciaire! It has been gnawing at me for seventeen years. You could never believe or understand the evil it has done me from every point of view. What I say may perhaps be offensive to your own idea of the matter. In any case, it is, for the moment, irremediable.

I must, before packing my cases (and they are many) appease the storm of the 10th, and then give birth to two articles destined to procure the money needed before I can leave.

I can therefore (provided always that things happen as I have arranged them in my mind) prepare to leave between the 15th and the 20th. Despite your absurd prohibition, I shall bring you some presents.

The *Fleurs du Mal* are printed. The cover is being made and the portrait. There are thirty-five new poems, and every old poem has been completely remodelled.

For the first time in my life, I am almost happy. The book is *almost good*, and will remain as a testimony of my disgust and hatred of everything.

How are you? You cannot give me more pleasure than in letting me know you are well.

Is it very cold?

And the cliff?

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

[*January*, 1861.]

My dear good mother, your letter made me weep; I, who never weep. Poor mother, all alone, don't be too unhappy. Who knows but this year may bring you some joy. Joy is like pain, both unexpected.

I shall relate to you in detail all my rage and my anguish. If I had had money, I should have left at once. Besides my anxiety about money, I had other vexations of a purely moral nature, and unhappily nothing is settled.

You did right in writing to me. For I was excessively uneasy. You must not be cross with me for being so brief; or, rather, no; I prefer to say everything to-day.

You know or you guess that in order to put ideas and images on paper, a certain animation, a certain joy of the mind is needed which is incompatible with great distress and furious anger, from which it follows that too much pain interferes with money-making.

You know also that I came to Neuilly in the hope of spending less and at the same time being kind to a sick woman.

Now you shall hear what happened, and, above all, learn how I contained my rage for a whole fortnight.

When one has lived nineteen years with and for a woman, there is something to say to her every day. But I found here a brother of hers, who had turned up again a year ago; and who would stay in Jeanne's room from 8 in the morning till 11 at night. Not one second for confidences. As I did not want to afflict her, considering the state she was in, I contained myself for a long time; but at last, one midnight, I told her as considerately as I could, that I had come to Neuilly for her and that I had no right to drive away her brother, but that since I was thrust aside, I would go back to my mother, who also needed me; also, that I certainly did not mean to keep her short of money, but that, since her brother took it all, to my detriment, it was just that he, who can earn more than a writer—and is not

50,000 francs in debt, which sum increases continually because of interest—should come to the help of his sick sister, and become a party, either to the extent of two-thirds or a half in her necessary expenses. I expected an explosion of bad temper. Nothing of the kind, but many tears. She told me that she was aware of my devotion, my torments, my agonies, that *what I said was reasonable,* that she meant to urge her brother to take up his business again, but that she greatly feared lest my request would be badly received, *since during all his years of absence he had never sent money to his mother.*

In effect, next day, she broached the subject. "You spend all day here. You make it impossible for me to live with Charles. He has got, partly on my account, into inextricable difficulties; he is going away, but he counts on you being willing to contribute half of my expenses."

You will never guess his reply, so stupid and so barbarous that, if it had been said directly to me, I should have slashed his face with my cane. "That I ought to be used to penury and difficulties; that when a man takes up with a woman he should know how to keep her; that, as for him, he had never put any money aside, and that, as far as the future was concerned, it was no good counting on him."

I asked Jeanne *what she thought of such a reply.* It seemed to me that there must be something underneath it all, that she might perhaps have contracted some huge debt to her brother which made him think he had the right not to bother about us. I questioned her gently on the matter. "How much have you borrowed from your brother *during the last year,* when I was living in the hotel?"

"He only gave me 200 francs." That is her reply. That is as much as to say, in good French, that, finding his life provided for at his sister's, he was in no hurry to return to his work. It is not astonishing, therefore, that she is so badly dressed and is not able even to pay her doctors.

All those tears in that aged face, all that indecision in

the enfeebled creature, could not but touch me; my anger died away. But I am in so perpetual a state of irritation that my other preoccupations only increase it.

To give you an idea, I need 4,000 francs on the 10th, and have but 1,860.

So you see how things are.

When Jeanne wants to see me, she comes into my room. This gentleman never leaves her, and if I decide to leave Paris, he will not come to the help of his sick sister.*

I have often and justly accused myself of a monstrous egotism. But, on my honour, mine never reached such a point.

But how much, then, does your cliff cost? That cliff makes me think the blackest thoughts. You guess it. But to earn money in such an imbroglio of horrors! Is it possible?

Think of my conseil judiciaire, and love me, and try and keep well.

Charles.

**Baudelaire wrote to Poulet-Malassis on 16 January, 1861: "I escaped from Neuilly, with dignity, not wishing to remain in a situation at once ridiculous and shameful. During 25 days I found myself in the presence of a man who spent most of his time in his sister's room, from 8 in the morning to 11 at night, hindering me in this manner from my only pleasure which consists in conversing with an old and infirm woman. When I tried to make him understand, through his sister's voice, that my extreme inconvenience or some kind of accident might necessitate on his part some effort at keeping his sister and helping me in my task, he observed:* "Non, non, pour maintenant, et pour l'avenir. *Later on he returned to the question, offering to do something if, on my side, I made a delegation of what remained to me of my private fortune. Can you conceive of any creature who had come from the end of the world, who had fallen from the moon, who had never troubled himself about his sister, who wants to make his past proof of devotion, and who dares to demand guarantees from one who for nineteen years has done what his duty did not command him to do? . . . A thousand pardons, my dear Malassis, for entertaining you with these shameful things. I have had to live between a rascal and a miserable woman whose brain is affected. I have escaped, mad with indignation."*

29th March, 1861.

I wanted to devote to-day to you, despite all my affairs; but it is already five o'clock, and since you want to keep your Easter peacefully, it is best to keep back for a couple of days longer the account of my wretchedness. In any case, I *know,* since I *wish it so,* that all *will finish soon.*

Generally, then, I will only tell you that your last letters contain nothing but wild statements, mistakes, absurd suppositions. I suffer and that is all. I have been ill several times; but I have not seen Jeanne again. For the rest, I repeat to you, all your letters are crazy.

It is not through merely stupid literary vanity that I ask if you received a number of the *Revue Contemporaine* which contained some of my verses. It was because nothing must be lost. Who knows but that some day you will be happy to collect all I ever did?

Your letters have been full of the most frightful things; I shall never get used to them.

I shall see that you receive a letter on Sunday evening, begun a month ago, two months, I have forgotten. That is if letters are still delivered at Honfleur on Sunday night.

I am with the *Revue Européenne* and have completely broken with the *Contemporaine.* You know that for two years now I have been much occupied with music. An important work by myself on *Richard Wagner* will appear the 31st. Shall I send it to you?

I embrace you.

Charles.

[*February or March,* 1861.]

Ah, dear mother, is any *time* left *us* in which to be happy? I dare not hope so. To be forty, under a conseil *judiciaire,* with immense debts, and, finally, worse than all, my will gone; ruined! Who can say if the intelligence itself be not dried up? I know nothing. I cannot know anything, since I have lost even the ability to make an effort.

Before all, I want to say something which I do not say often enough to you, and which you no doubt do not know, most of all if you judge me by appearances; it is that my love for you grows without ceasing. I am ashamed to confess that that love does not give me strength enough to raise myself. I look at the past years, the awful years, and spend my time reflecting on the brevity of life; nothing more! and my will rusts more and more. If ever a man knew, in youth, bile and hypochondria, that man is myself. Yet I long to live, and would fain taste a little security, glory and contentment with myself. Some terrible thing says to me: *Never,* and again something else says, *try.*

With so many plans and projects, accumulated in the two or three portfolios I dare no longer open, what am I likely to achieve? Perhaps nothing, maybe.

April 1st, 1861.

This last page was written a month, six weeks, two months ago, I no longer know when. I have fallen into a sort of perpetual nervous terror; my sleep is frightful, my awakening terrible; impossible to do anything. The copies of my own book remained for a month on my table before I could find courage to address them. I have not written to Jeanne, I have not seen her for nearly three months; and, naturally, since it was impossible, I sent her not one penny. (She came to see me yesterday; she had been in hospital, and her brother, on whom I thought she could rely, in her absence sold part of her furniture. She means to sell the rest to pay some debts.) In this horrible state of mind, impotence and hypochondria, the idea of suicide returned to me; I can say now that it has passed away; but every moment of the day that idea obsessed me. I saw in it complete deliverance, deliverance from everything. At the same time, *and for three months,* by a strange contradiction, but only in seeming, I was *praying all the time* (to whom? to what definite being? Indeed, I know not) for two things;

for myself, strength to live; for you, long long years. Let me say in passing, your desire to die is absurd and most unkind, since your death for me would be the last blow, and would mean the eternal loss of my happiness.

In the end, my obsession disappeared, driven away by the violent, and inevitable occupation of my article on Wagner, which I wrote in three days in a printing office; without the urge of the printer I could never have done it. Since I have again become ill with languor, with horror and fear. And physically, too, I have been pretty ill two or three times; but one of the things which I find particularly unbearable is that when I fall asleep and even during sleep, I hear very distinctly voices, and whole phrases, very commonplace and quite trivial, and having no relation to my affairs.

Your letters came; they were not of a nature to comfort me. You are always armed to stone me with the crowd. It all dates from my childhood, as you know. How do you always manage to be to your son the very contrary of a *friend*, except in regard to money, provided again—and it is then your character shows itself at once absurd and generous —that it is not to your hurt? I took care to note all the new poems for you, in the list of contents. It was easy for you to verify that they were all made to fit the book. A book I worked on over twenty years, *and which I can not even control the reprinting of.**

As for M. Cardinne, that is a serious matter, but in a sense opposed, quite opposed, to that in which you take it. In the midst of all my anguish, I will not have a priest fight against me in my old mother's mind, and I shall see that is so, if I am able and have the strength. The man's conduct is monstrous and inexplicable. As to burning books, that is never done, except in madhouses where they want to see a flare. And I stupidly deprived myself of a precious

* *Evidently a question of the second edition of Les Fleurs du Mal. His mother had doubtless yet again protested against certain poems which shocked her Catholicism.*

copy, to please him, and give him something he had longed for, for three years! and not a copy is left for my friends! You always had to fall on your knees before someone. First, to M. Emon, you remember. Now to a priest, who has not even the delicacy to hide one wounding thought from you. And finally he does not even understand that the book parts from a Catholic idea; but that is a consideration of another kind.

What more than anything saved me from suicide was two ideas which must seem very childish to you. Firstly, that my duty was to furnish you with exact details as to the payment of all my debts, and so *I should first have to go to Honfleur,* where the documents are put away, intelligible to me alone. The second, shall I confess it, was that I could not bear to die before having, at least, published my critical works, even if I renounce the plays (a second is projected), the novels, and finally the large book I have had in mind for two years, *My Naked Heart,* in which will be heaped up all my rage.

Ah! if ever that is printed, the *Confessions of J. J.* will seem pale. You see I am still dreaming.

Unluckily for the achievement of this singular book, I ought to have kept the heaps of letters from everybody which I have, for twenty years now, given away or burnt.

Finally, as I told you, an urgent occupation drew me from my lethargy and sickness for thrice twenty-four hours. The malady will return.

Relative to the "conseil judiciaire," what you tell me has again preoccupied me; I believe I have finally found a *compromise,* which will only *half* ruin me, which will give me immense leisure, and which will consequently permit me to *enrich* your income, since, however little I shall then earn, I shall need, at most, *but the half. I must explain.* This accursed invention! the maternal invention of a mind too much occupied with money, dishonoured me, drove me into ever-increasing debt, which killed all friendliness in me,

and even fettered my education as artist and man of letters, which remains still unfinished. Blindness creates worse scourges than malice. What is certain is that my present situation cannot continue much longer. I do not think I can go mad, but I can become so unsociable that I should pass as mad. . . .

6th May, 1861.

My dear mother, if you are really utterly motherly, and if you are not yet tired out, come to Paris, come and see me, seek me out even. For me, there are a thousand terrible reasons why I cannot go to Honfleur to seek for what I so much want, courage and your tenderness. At the end of March I wrote: *Shall we ever* meet again? I was in one of those states in which the terrible truth grows manifest. I would give I know not what to spend some days with you, you, the only being on whom my life hangs, eight days, three days, some hours.

You do not read my letters attentively enough; you imagine I am lying, or at least exaggerating, when I speak of my despair, my health, my horror of living. I tell you I want to see you and that I cannot come to Honfleur. Your letters are full of errors and false ideas which conversation could put right, but which whole volumes of writing will not suffice to destroy.

Every time I take up the pen to tell you how I am placed, I am afraid. I am afraid of killing you, destroying your feeble body. And I, ceaselessly, and unsuspected by you, I am on the verge of suicide! I believe you love me passionately, blindly; your nature is so large! And I loved you passionately in childhood; later, as a result of your injustice, I was lacking in respect, as if maternal injustice could authorise a lack of filial respect. Often I have repented, though, as is my wont, I said nothing to you. I am no longer that violent or ungrateful child. Long meditation on my fate and on your character has led me to understand all my faults and all your generosity. But now, the evil is

done, partly by your imprudence and partly by my fault.

We are evidently destined to love each other, to live for each other, to end our lives as honestly and peacefully as possible. And yet, in the terrible situation in which I am placed, I am convinced that one of us will kill the other, and that finally we shall kill each other. After my death, you will cease to live; that is clear. I am the one object for which you live. After your death, above all if you die of some shock I have caused you, I should undoubtedly kill myself. Your death, of which you often speak with too much resignation, would in no way ameliorate my situation; the conseil judiciaire would go on (why should it not?) nothing would be paid, and, to add to my sorrows, I should have *the horrible sensation of complete isolation.* For me to kill myself would be absurd, would it not? "You want to leave your old mother all alone?" you say. Truly, even if I have not strictly the right to do so, yet I think the amount of sorrow endured by me for *nearly thirty years* would justify it. "And God?" you will say. I desire, with all my heart (and with what sincerity no one but myself can know), to believe that an exterior and invisible Being is in charge of my fate; but how am I to believe it?

(The idea of God makes me think of that accursed Curé. In the painful feelings my letter will no doubt arouse in you, I wish you not to consult him. That Curé is my enemy, through sheer stupidity, maybe.)

To return to the idea of suicide, not an obsession, but an idea which returns periodically, there is one thing should reassure you. I cannot kill myself until I have put my affairs in order. All my documents are at Honfleur, in great confusion. Therefore a great deal must be done at Honfleur, and once I am there, I shall not be able again to tear myself from your side. For you may presume that I could not desecrate your house with so detestable an action. Besides, you would go mad. Why then suicide? Is it because of debts? Yes, and yet debts can be overcome. It is above

all because of my frightful tiredness, the result of an impossible situation, *too much prolonged*. Every moment shows me I have no more desire to live. A great imprudence was committed by you in my youth. Your imprudence and my *former faults* weigh upon and envelope me. My situation is atrocious. There are people who salute me, there are people who make up to me. There may be some who envy me. My literary situation is more than good, I can do what I will and everything will be printed. As I have a non-popular sort of mind, I shall not gain much, but I shall leave a great reputation behind me, I know, if only I have the courage to live. But my spiritual health is detestable, perhaps lost. I have still many projects: *My Naked Heart, novels, two plays*, one for the Théâtre-Français, will all ever be accomplished? *I think not.* My situation as regards decency is fearful, there is the chief evil. Never any rest; insults, jibes, humiliations, of which you can have no idea, which corrupt the imagination and paralyse it. I make a little money, it is true; if I had no debts, and *if I had no more money of my own,* I SHOULD BE RICH. Meditate that phrase. I could even give you money, I could, without danger, be charitable to Jeanne. I shall refer to her again, but you have provoked me into these explanations. All my money vanishes in a prodigal and unhealthy existence (for I live wretchedly) and in paying or rather inadequately paying off old debts, bailiffs' costs, stamped documents, etc.

In a moment I shall come to real things, I mean present ones, for truly I must be saved, and you alone can save me. I must say everything to you, now. I am alone, without friends or mistress or dog or cat to whom to complain. There is only my father's portrait, and that is always silent.

I am in that horrible state I was in in the autumn of 1844. A resignation worse than fury.

And my physical health, which I need for you, for myself, my obligations, is another problem. I must speak of it to you, even though you care so little.

I do not mean those nervous affections which destroy me day by day and which kill my courage, or the vomitings, the insomnias, nightmares, fits of exhaustion. I have spoken of them too often. But there is no point in being ashamed with you. You know that when I was young I had a venereal disease, which later I thought entirely cured. At Dijon, after 1848, it appeared again, and was again suppressed. Now it returns and in a new form, spots on the skin, and an extraordinary lassitude in all the articulations. Believe me, I *know what it is*. Perhaps as a result of the misery in which I am plunged, my terror exaggerates the evil. But what I need is a severe regimen, and certainly, not in the life I am leading, can I give myself up to one.

I leave all on one side and go back to my dreams again, with real pleasure, before coming to the project I want to speak about. Who knows if I shall ever again be able to open to you all my soul, *that you never knew or appreciated!* I write unhesitatingly, so true I know it to be.

There was in my youth a period of passionate love for you, listen and read without fear. I have never said as much to you before. I remember being with you in a carriage, you had come out of a nursing-home to which you had been sent, and you showed me, to prove that you had thought of your son, some pen and ink drawings you had made for me. Do you see how terrible my memory is? Later, the square Saint-André-des-Arts and Neuilly. Long walks, perpetual tenderness! I remember the embankment, so sad at evening. Ah! that was the best time of mother-love for me. I ask your pardon for calling *best time* what was doubtless worst for you. But all the time I was living in you and you were uniquely mine. You were at once my idol and my friend. Perhaps you will be astonished to see me speak with such passion of a time so distant; it astonishes me, too. It is perhaps because I have, once again, conceived a desire to die, that these ancient things present themselves so vividly to my mind.

Later, you know the frightful education your husband wanted to impose on me; I am forty, but I cannot think of colleges without anguish, or of the fear my step-father inspired in me. And yet I loved him, and I am wise enough to-day to do him justice. Always he was so obstinately clumsy. I pass on rapidly, for I see tears in your eyes.

Finally, I got away, and then I was completely abandoned. I became intoxicated with pleasure, with perpetual excitement, with travelling, fine furniture, pictures, women, etc. To-day I bear their cruel weight. As to the "conseil judiciaire," I have only one word to say: I know now the immense value of money and understand the gravity of all things concerned with it; I understand that you could have thought yourself wise and working for my welfare, but there is still one question, one question which has always obsessed me. How can this idea never have presented itself to your mind? "It is possible that my son may never, to the same degree as myself, know how to behave; but it is also possible that he may become a remarkable man in other ways. In that case, what shall I do? Shall I condemn him to a double existence, contradictory, honourable on one side, odious and scorned on the other? Shall I condemn him to drag on to old age a deplorable stigma, an injurious stigma, a cause of impotence and misery?" It is obvious that if the "conseil judiciaire" had not been appointed, my fortune would have vanished, and I should have had to acquire a taste for work. The "conseil" was appointed, *all is eaten up and I am old and wretched.*

Can I rejuvenate myself? That is the whole question. All this turning back to the past has no other object but to show you that I have valid excuses, if not a complete justification. If you feel reproach in what I write, know at least that it in no way changes my admiration for your large heart, or my gratitude for your devotion. You always sacrificed yourself; that is your one genius. Less reason than charity. I ask more, I ask at the same time your advice,

your help, entire understanding between us, so as to extricate me. I supplicate you, come, come; I am at the end of my nervous powers, at the end of my courage, at the end of hope. I foresee only a continuation of horror. I foresee my literary existence for ever crippled. I foresee catastrophe. You could easily, for a week, ask hospitality from your friends, Ancelle, for example. I would give I know not what to see you, to embrace you. I foresee catastrophe, yet I cannot go to you now. Paris is horrible. Twice already I have committed a grave imprudence which you will find more severe terms for; I shall end by losing my head.

I ask you to be happy, and ask you to make me happy, too, in so far as we can still experience *happiness.*

You allowed me to describe my project; here it is. I ask for a half-measure. The alienation of a large sum limited to 10,000 for example; 2,000 for my immediate deliverance, 2,000 in your hands to guard against foreseen or unforeseen necessities, of life, of clothes, etc., for one year (Jeanne will go into a nursing-home, where only what is strictly necessary will be paid). But I shall talk of her again in a moment. And it is again you who have induced me to do so. Then, 6,000 in the hands of Ancelle or Marin, which will be spent slowly, prudently, in such a way as to pay out perhaps more than 10,000 and so prevent all noise and scandal at Honfleur.

There would be a year of peace. I should be the worst fool and most utter rascal if I did not become young again through it. All the money I shall gain during that time (10,000; 5,000 only perhaps) *will be given into your hands.* I shall not hide from you any one of my affairs, any of my gains. Instead of filling up the deficit this money could be applied to the debts, and so on for subsequent years. Thus I could *perhaps,* by rejuvenating under your very eyes, *pay everything,* without my capital being diminished by more

than 10,000, without reckoning, it is true, the 4,600 of preceding years. And the house will be saved, for that is one of the considerations always present to me.

If you agree to this marvellous plan, I should like to be reinstalled at the end of the month, or at once, maybe. I authorise you to come for me. You understand that there is a mass of details which cannot go into a letter. I want, in one word, that no sum be paid without your consent, and after mature discussion between us; in a word, that you should become *my real "conseil judiciaire."* How can one have to associate so horrible an idea with the sweet idea of a mother?

In that case, unfortunately, farewell must be said to the small sums, the small gains, 100, 200, here, there, which the ordinary life of Paris brings in day by day. Then there will be large speculations and large books, for the payment of which we shall have to wait longer. Consult yourself only, your conscience and your God, since you are happy enough to believe in him. Be measured in what you say to Ancelle. He is kind, but narrow-minded. He cannot believe that an obstinate and wilful person whom he has had to reprimand can be an important one. He would let me *starve* through sheer obstinacy. Instead of thinking only of money, think a little of glory, calm and *my life.*

Then, I say, I shall not pay visits of a fortnight, a month or two months. I shall stay with you always, except when we both came to Paris.

Proofs can always be sent by post.

I have still another of those false ideas which continually recur in your letters, to rectify. *I am never bored in solitude, and I am never bored with you.* I only know that your friends will make me unhappy, but I consent.

Sometimes I have had the idea of convoking a family council or of applying to a magistrate. Do you know, I should have some good things to say, even if I said only

this. *I have produced eight volumes in wretched conditions. I can earn my living. I am being destroyed by my youthful debts.*

I did not do so out of respect for you, out of regard for your terrible sensitiveness. Deign to be grateful. I repeat, I am determined to have recourse only to you.

From the beginning of next year, I shall consecrate to Jeanne the income of what capital remains. She will retire somewhere so as not to be completely alone. This is what happened to her; her brother pushed her into a hospital to get rid of her, and when she came out she discovered he had sold some of her furniture and clothes. In four months, since my flight from Neuilly, I have given her seven francs.

I implore you, calm, give me calm, work, and a little love.

It is obvious that at this very moment there are horribly urgent things; thus I have again committed the fault, in this inevitable meddling with banks, of turning aside for my personal debts some hundreds of francs which did not belong to me. *I was absolutely forced to do so.* It goes without saying that I thought I could immediately put things right. A person in London refuses me the 400 francs which she owes me. Another who should have paid me 300 francs is abroad. Always the unexpected. To-day I had the *terrible courage* to write the person in question a confession of my fault. What scene will take place? I cannot tell. But I wanted to clear my conscience. I hope that, in respect of my name and my talent, there will be no scandal, and that he will not mind waiting.

Goodbye. I am worn out. To go back to my health, I have not slept, nor eaten for nearly three days; my throat is constricted, yet I have to work.

No, I do not say goodbye; for I hope to see you soon.

Oh, read my letter attentively, and try to understand it. I know that this letter will affect you painfully, but you

will certainly find in it some accent of sweetness, of love, and even of hope, so rarely heard by you.

And I love you.

Charles.

7th May [1861].

My dear mother, I may have alarmed you too much this morning; without knowing how, the fever, suffocation and trembling disappeared, and I could eat.

But all the difficulties and disquietudes remain. What insupportable crises!

You did not notice that at the end of the *Wagner* there was a part so far unpublished; I marked it for you on the first page.

As for the critical articles, you must all the same get used to them. You have had several years in which to do so and anyhow it will go on for ever.

I have seen the person whose visit I feared. How humiliating!

No postage stamps.

I thought it was best to write to you at once.

Charles.

8th May, 1861.

Indeed, it is possible that gratitude may make me do what even the harshest necessity has been unable to make me do. Of that gratitude, there is no point in speaking to you, for you are the only friend I have; I feel that I must repay you with all possible speed.

But now I am terrified by the swiftness of your zeal.

My first thought was to send you back the 500 francs. I felt ashamed. I reflected, then, that on the 15th I should have new difficulties to deal with, and then I saw by your other letter that you considered them as on account of an arrangement to be made later.

You tell me I am not to be upset by the illness I have caused in you. I have seen you suffer so often from the mind that I beg you to write at once and tell me how you are. *I beg you, you understand?* Besides, I shall write every day up to your departure, and I hope you will do almost as much.

To be brief, these 500 francs might bring me up *to the 20th,* above all if, as I hope, I can give birth to two articles for *L'Européenne,* payment for which I shall cede to the friend from whom I *forcibly borrowed* so considerable a sum, and if the Embassy, to whom I am writing, through the offices of the President of the Society of Men of Letters, procures the 400 francs which are due me in London. That cursed letter from London, containing the most outrageous insults, was the principal cause of this last attack, which lasted no less than three days.

At last I had the meeting I so terribly feared. It was more than friendly. The man came to see me, fearing I might be wretched about it. He said he thought what I had done was fairly natural and inevitable, that he was astonished such accidents did not happen more frequently as a result of those fearful crises in which he had so often seen me. And all without sarcasm. But I felt humiliated by so much kindness. "All the same," he added, "as I am in very great need of my money, tell me when and how you can make it good." As I was not then counting on you, I replied that the *Revue Européenne* had promised to pay me in advance for whatever I gave them, and that I would give over to him the price of the next two fragments, which, roughly, would make up the sum. Unfortunately, he is in the most urgent need of his money *before the 25th.* I must work unceasingly, therefore. But this morning, when I read your letters, my first thought was *that I must defend myself* against that indolence and idleness which always follow a momentary relief; for then future difficulties are ignored; *it is even one of the reasons why I myself do not wish my "conseil judi-*

ciaire" to be done away with, nor all my debts paid *at once. Beatitude would create idleness.* This "conseil judiciaire," as I think, should not be abolished until I or you are utterly sure that I am able to work always, ceaselessly, and even when I do not *need to.*

I mean, therefore, to go on as if I had no hope of being saved by you; if I can refund the sum myself that will be so much saved out of the two thousand that I need at once for myself; so much to use in other ways.

Thus, Ancelle will turn up again in my affairs! It is inevitable, I know. I think you need not show him my letter. *There are things one says only to one's mother;* I do not mean definite things, like those to which you allude, but I mean simply on account of the style, the passion; because of *all that is intimate and secret in such a letter,* it cannot be shown; you have only to glance over it again and you will think as I do. *It is a real question of decency.*

I maintain just what I said. You know the business by heart now. You can explain it to him unemotionally and firmly. *You want me to have a certain sum immediately, you want to take away with you a certain sum which you will distribute as and how needed. You want to leave in the hands of Ancelle or Marin a larger sum with which to indemnify in order,* DEPENDING ON THEIR HONESTY, *and as necessity shall determine, such as might worry me or us.*

And then, please God, I promise you that I shall account to you for all my business, and that I will never again receive money, gained in literature, without consulting you on the possible employment of such money.

You ask me if Ancelle could oppose such an arrangement and this new conveyance.

Strictly speaking, and from a legal point of view, yes.

Morally, no, because of the liking and friendship he bears you. And also because, even if his intelligence is limited, I think he can understand, if moved by your eloquence,

that I am not anybody, and that I am worth an effort being made *for me.*

The swiftness with which you make your decision shows me *that I have pained you.* Perhaps you fear my bones may decay in a week or so. *There are people who live for sixty years, despite their infected blood.* But I am terrified, if only because of the melancholy it engenders. Three months of iodide of potassium, baths at Barèges, and steam baths, will purify a man. As for my nervous troubles, that is something quite different. There is no remedy but cold baths and the *will,* alas!

I thank you a thousand thousand times for your goodwill. And soon I shall be able to embrace you. I repeat that I shall work patiently and not rest on a still uncertain success.

If only I could work without these sudden fits of exhaustion, for five or six months, I would say straight out to you: "We can do away with the conseil judiciaire, for since I now have the habit of work, fortune will return." But I have never done that.

I cannot procure you any distraction in Paris except by taking you to the *Salon,* which is just open. I remember your determination never to go to theatres or concerts. Forgive me, in the midst of all the pain I cause you, for mentioning these trifles.

When you are not with me, *you must never never go out on foot. The streets terrify me even.*

One word more: I can, *without detriment to my affairs,* find lodgings for you; what price? Where? Do you want to dine in, or out? You understand that it is easy for me, knowing Paris so well, to help you find what you would like. Ah! *and for how many days?*

I embrace you again with all my heart. When *shall I have* the right to say in my turn: Are you pleased with me?

C. B.

I implore you, do not hurry too much and make yourself ill. I can brave the storm a while longer, especially with such great hopes. Act carefully, and if any objection or possible difficulty should occur to you, let me know.

My letter is fearfully scrawled.

Wednesday 10th July, 1861.

My dear mother, here in brief are the reasons why I must still put off, hang about, drag on, etc.

1. Money to receive.

2. The proofs of *Reflexions sur mes contemporains,* which have been printed in such disorder that, had I been absent the book would have been awful.

3. To make sure of regular work between now and New Year's Day.

4. A long discussion with a Minister in regard to a mission to London (for next year) (too long to relate). I must, to obtain it, stay with the *Revue Européenne.* If I leave it for the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* this mission will be lost.

5. I wanted the two pictures by Greuze which belonged to my father, the Boilly and other drawings, restored under my very eyes almost. That has been done, but they are not dry and consequently cannot be packed.

Finally, 6th, I still have an immense amount of proofs to correct, and then I must see to the frontispiece, portrait, flowers, decorations for a third edition of *Les Fleurs* (at 25 francs a copy) that the publisher thinks worth risking. A very strange idea, and a bad one, I think. What sort of mama would give *Les Fleurs* as a New Year's gift to her children? and what papa even?

The little puppet I enclose in my letter is the first of successive portraits which the photographer has to make to

guide the engraver. I have the worst opinion, not only of the operation itself, but also of the artist to whom the ornamental initials, flowers, portrait, frontispiece, etc., are confided.

My affairs, however, are very prosperous. Soon we shall see each other.

Many persons advise me to profit by the present vacancy (*Scribe*), or the next probable vacancies, to have myself proposed as a candidate for the Academy. But the "conseil judiciaire!" I wager that even there, in that *impartial* sanctuary, it would go against me.

I love and embrace you.

Charles.

You will be pleased with your false Greuze. I shall keep the other.

25th July, 1861.

. . . To be of the Academy is, to my mind, the one honour that a real man of letters could solicit without blushing. As for the Academicians I have criticised, jeered at, and who most certainly will not vote for me, I shall take care to call on them at an hour when I am sure not to find them in. But your answer sins in two respects: 1st, I did not say that I meant to offer myself immediately. I said that I meant to offer myself *very shortly*. The chair of M. Scribe is vacant; there may be others. I am not sure. 2nd, one must expect to be unsuccessful two or three times. I must take my place. The number of votes I obtain the first time will serve to show me if I have any real chance for the future. Anyhow, for some years almost all the elections have borne some political complexion; often false, but imposed by circumstance; that is to say, a seat is Imperialist or Opposition, according to the politics of the people who vote for it. Imagine the confusion thus created. One might be Opposition, or perhaps Imperialist, and yet have friends in both parties of the Academy. In that case half your

friends, from a sense of duty, would vote against you. I am unfortunately in the position of having friends everywhere, and then I take no trouble to colour my candidature with any kind of political bias.

By the way, I must say that I believe in the near downfall of the Empire. What is evident to everyone is that the health of the Emperor is much in danger. In the case of accident, no one believes in the solidity of the Constitution nor in the solidity of the Regency (I must confess that all prophecy in this matter is bound to be very uncertain), but the return of the Princes of the House of Orleans would be much welcomed. People think there is some possibility of a Republic happening without disorder, but others think (and they are very rare) that the Imperial Constitution will be respected, and everyone is in agreement to desire *a great deal of liberty*, for they have been deprived of it too long.

All that bores you, perhaps, but one has to be interested in all of mankind's old stupidities.

Here is the explanation of the 1,500 francs I just referred to. I have four manuscripts which could be divided between the *Revue Fantaisiste*, the *Revue Européenne* and perhaps the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

The mission of which I spoke (London, Universal Exhibition, in May) will only be given me if I remain with *l'Européenne*, the official review.

M. Buloz warmly invites me to join his staff definitely and for good. On the one hand, the worthy fellow is convinced I am a bad critic, and only wants from me works of pure imagination, and then again, he is so miserly that, when the London Exhibition opens, he will never agree to pay me what the Minister offers (1,000 or 1,200 francs a month) and will doubtless send some rich man of letters instead.

In such an event, I shall have almost sacrificed the mission and the favour of this Government, and even every Government. I shall send my novels to the *Revue des Deux*

Mondes and I shall later do the important work on London *at my own expense.*

Besides, already, in thought, I am betraying the *Revue Européenne,* for I have said to the *Revue Fantaisiste:* here are four manuscripts; publish them in several months if you like, but pay me now. Agreed.

Of all the literary dreams to accomplish at Honfleur I say nothing. It would take too long. It will be quicker in conversation; in one word, twenty subjects for novels, two subjects for plays, and an *immense book on myself, My Confessions.*

As for my dreams of money, I shall say still less, for they would take much longer. How many variations on paper! How many figures! How many ingenious ways of living, of paying my debts, my expenses, your 23,000 francs, and even of making a fortune! How many dreams! And yet life rushes by with a heart-breaking swiftness. In these dreams of money I see already a symptom of old age. . . .

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

The fine edition of the *Fleurs* is selling very badly. I expected as much. With all his photographs, both small and large, the artist cannot possibly be successful. It is very natural. Photography can produce only hideous results. And also, I am very afraid lest the skeleton and the bouquets of *fleurs vénéneuses* turn out badly. I ought to draw myself.

I have taken out a subscription to some cold showers. Despite some tiredness, I am really very well. Seriously, I feel old age coming on, and as I have much to do, my weakness frightens me.

Sunday 1st September, [1861].

My dear mother, I dared not write again, and every day I said to myself, she must think me a thief! and further imagines I shall never come and see her. As to the *Revue Fantaisiste* (well named), you guessed right; there were dif-

ficulties they did not tell me of, and the young man only returned from Bordeaux quite recently. Anyhow, I have managed to snatch a little money and I at once send you half by rail, carriage paid. I believe I can send you the rest this month. However, you know that my settled intention is to send money to you thus at not too long intervals. Alas! How many projects. Shall we live through them?

To-morrow, or the day after, I shall send off a third box of pictures and drawings (there will be a fourth), then I leave to spend four or five days with you. I am still full of business and difficulties. But I swear that this time my life shall be regulated despite all my difficulties. I shall write the very day of my departure (the 4th or 5th). The truth is my visit has no object, no real object, but that of *embracing you* (I cannot endure not to, longer), and also to *refresh my soul, and to arrange and hang things.*

I shall leave in Paris my clothes, books, papers, and a last picture which would seem immense in your doll's house.

As to the drawings, I really do not know where I shall put them. There are, I think, over three hundred.* On my next visit, I shall bring what remains.

I shall work a little during the five days, between the unpacking. I should have found it difficult to resist leaving to-night or to-morrow if I had slept last night, but I caught a chill which has made my eyes, teeth and ears ache frightfully; it has gone on since yesterday midnight. I had also to go out to-day to make notes in the print room at the Louvre. *Imagine what a state my eyes are in.* Two bloodshot counters for Lotto!

I forgot to tell you the amount of the sum, 200 francs. Don't be angry with me nor scold me, I was duped myself.

** Baudelaire was, as art critic, a veritable forerunner. He had acquired a collection of which the smallest items would to-day be valuable; on his death Mme. Aupick distributed to his friends works by Constantin Guys (of which he had a great many), Meryon, Réthel, a Boilly, a Legros, some Whistlers, Jongkinds, Devérias, etc.*

I hope to give you back not only the rest of the 500 francs, but even the grand total, if, alas, I do not grow utterly stupid.

I embrace you and shall see you soon.

Charles.

Christmas, 25th December, 1861.

Poor abandoned little mother! Your last letter pained me very much, yet, from the length of time I have allowed to elapse before replying, no one would think so, I know. Is it possible this trifling visit to Paris can have worked on you to such a point that you are now bored, you, who were never bored! I was much astonished by your letter, since I always thought you so energetic that my affection for you was mingled with deep admiration. I am not flattering you, but I am like other men, in that I admire especially those qualities I do not myself possess; and besides, I personally cannot love if I do not admire (which in passing will explain my aversion to my brother, not to mention the fact that I have no small number of grievances against him, for he has not, as you have done, tried to appease my rancour by an immense devotion). And bearing on this point, here is the page of Madame Batôn, which I return to you.

If you ask me how I can be so barbarous as to leave you such a time without news or consolation, I, who am everything to you, and whose only means of thanking or amusing you is by writing of himself, I must reply first that I have been ill several times, and then (and this is the main and most regrettable reason) that when I am so unfortunate as to neglect a duty, next day that duty is still more difficult to fulfil; so from day to day it becomes more and more difficult, until at last the obligation seems quite impossible to meet. That is due to the state of anguish and nervous terror in which I live perpetually, and what I have just said applies to every possible duty, even to the tender and natural duty of writing to my mother. I never get out of a difficult

situation unless I am blown out; but what I suffer in living you see is almost inexpressible. And even in November two catastrophes fell upon me, one after the other. And now, as if I had not a sufficient accumulation of difficulties, I find I have added a new one, that of my candidacy. Ah! had I but known; the agony! the fatigue! You cannot possibly imagine the trials, the letters, the steps, this strange fantasy exacts. I have seen only a few Academicians, but already my nerves are completely upset. One thing, however, is lucky in all this fatiguing business, and that is that I am keen about it. And then it is impossible to live without a mania of some kind, some *hobby*. But always I see suicide before me as the only, and above all the easiest, solution to all the horrible complications in which I have been condemned to live for so long. The greater part of the time I tell myself: if I live, I shall always live in the same manner, damned, and when my natural end comes, I shall be old, worn out, out of fashion, riddled with debts, and for ever dishonoured by my infamous tutelage. But were I to finish up once and for all, having found energy enough to leave an exact account of my affairs, the ruins of my fortune would all have to go in payment of my debts. In any case, life itself, even without debts, seems to me utterly devoid of pleasure.

Again, I say to myself: But after all, *there is my mother*, and I must think of her, and I must repay her by giving her some joy. This perpetual combat in my spirit wears me out, my melancholy destroys my faculties, and then add to that my conviction that justice is not done me and that I see everything succeeding perfectly where fools are concerned.

The only good news you send me (and believe me I did think about it and was worried) is that at last your digestion is improved. The only good news I can give you is that I am myself again and that latterly, even in the midst of the most lively disquiet, I found strength to work again and finish a long study with which I am very pleased, but which only served me as an occasion for more completely

breaking with the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Now, again, I find it impossible to work on account of all this academic pother.

I write anyhow, there is so much to say. Believe me, if you like, but I assure you that in taking this rash step I thought above all of you. The only thing that interests me personally is the trifling emolument attached to the chair, but the exact amount of which I do not know. For you must guess that I do not feel in my soul any desire for the approbation *of all those old fools* (I use a term which some of them even, use to describe the others), but I thought that as you attached immense importance to public honours, if I could, by a *miracle*, which is the word, succeed, you would feel immensely happy.

It is true I also thought, if by some extraordinary chance I succeed, my mother will perhaps understand at last that I cannot remain in my dishonourable situation. Then, maybe, some solution might be found. One of my greatest worries was the following: I am so hated, and there are such evil people, that some fine morning I shall find in some rag a phrase like this: "Since when have 'interdits' * had the right to sit in Assembly?" Or else, "It is very natural that an 'interdit' should want to take place among *all these doting old men.*" Thank God, that has *not yet* taken place. This cursed "conseil judiciaire" has always made me timid and awkward. It seems to me I have some shameful sore that everyone can see. Think what I have endured for seventeen years.

When I see you, I shall make you laugh perhaps with the story of some of my visits. But if I wrote it all, it would make a whole volume. Lamertine wanted to turn me from my project, by saying that at my age one ought not to expose oneself to a rebuff (it seems I look young). De Vigny, whom I did not know, closed his door to everyone else, and kept me three hours. He is the only one who up to the

* *Interdits—under tutelage—as who should say "undischarged's."*

present has taken an interest in the matter, and the proof is that he sent round yesterday to ask me to call on him again in the course of ten days, after I had seen other members, so that I might give him an account of my impressions. Like Lamartine, at first he tried to dissuade me, but when I told him that on Sainte-Beuve's advice, I had begun by officially declaring my candidature to the secretary, he said that, since the evil was done, I must absolutely go on with it. Mérimée, who is a friend, avoided seeing me (it is obvious he has a candidate of his own whom he is pushing. Friendly as he is with the chateau, he has evidently an Imperialist candidate in view). My visit to M. Viennet was funny enough to make a book. M. Villemain is a fool and a pedant, a solemn ape, whose manner of receiving me I shall make him pay dear for if I live long enough. M. Patin, against whom I had been warned, was charming. From the outset, already completely discouraged, full of disgust and rage, I had an idea I thought brilliant. Seeing the time I was losing, I decided my visits must be paid for like a doctor's, but not by *my patients*, by the public instead; that is to say, I thought of writing them up day by day and so making a *humorous book* to be published either during the discussion relative to my election or after it. You can guess the effect, the Academy barred to me for ever, and then the accusation of treachery. I should have been accused of going to see people with the preconceived idea of making them pose in a comic attitude. Alfred de Vigny, to whom I had the effrontery to communicate my fine plan, told me I was not the inventor of the idea, for Victor Hugo had once had the same temptation, but that, his election finally succeeding, he had not published the book.

Altogether, I must say my candidature has appeared much less startling than I feared. Many people even found it quite natural, and have praised my courage.

There are two vacant chairs, Scribe's and Lacordaire's. The candidates are innumerable, it is said there are seven-

teen. I remember these: Dufaure, lawyer; de Carné, political writer; de Broglie, the little puppet of the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* who wishes to sit by his papa's side, who is already in the Academy, *doubtless as an ancient member of the Cabinet;* the Archbishop of Paris! ! ! etc., etc. Literary candidates are: Gozlan (no chance, I think); Jules Lacroix, the brother of the bibliophile Jacob; Cuvillier-Fleury, the journalist of the *Débats;* my friend Octave Feuillet (who stands a good chance); Camille Doucet (writer of detestable comedies, head of a Department in the Ministry of State); etc., etc. Théophile Gautier, the only one whose election would rehabilitate the Academy, will not compromise his dignity and does not offer himself for election; and there are such intrigues, such mysteries! And I have thrust myself into all these miasmas unwittingly.

(*Are you intimate enough with M. Lebrun* to write him in my favour? But, in that case, I must see your letter.)

I omit two smaller tortures. I pay my visits on foot, in rags (that, however, is indifferent to me) and I have all the difficulty in the world to raise copies of my books to give to those who express a desire to read them. I speak only of literary Academicians. For as to the politicians, the Thiers, the Guizots and other important intriguers, I long not even to see them.

It is a great misfortune that I did not work to win Mérimée to my side some months ago, for it is evident he has much influence with his colleagues. He would no doubt have asked me to wait, but he might possibly have undertaken to help me in another election.

Ouf! Let us talk about something else. Now comes my November epic, a sad epic, as you will see. I told you I hoped to return to you at the beginning of November and finally attempt the accomplishment of my too ancient projects, sedentary and incessantly laborious life, short and rare visits to Paris to discuss business affairs. Then, suddenly, in a few days both the reviews on which I depended, the *Fantaisiste*

and *L'Européenne* disappear (De Calonne was too strong, and the Ministers, in giving him back the subvention, sacrificed *L'Européenne* to him. I cannot go back to him, for we are at daggers drawn, and, besides, I know he will not pay me. He will devour, or rather his wife will devour for clothes, the 140,000 francs destined to another end). So I now have a number of manuscripts on my hands very difficult to place. Firstly, I did not too much lose my head, I did not tell you (to be pleasant, I hid the fact) that I had found means of redeeming the famous shawl. I thought then, that after all I had thus a *thousand francs* in hand, and with such a sum could make people show a little patience; and that I would wait patiently for the moment when my visits having been made, I could set to work again, make other connections, and finally leave.

Then I paid a visit to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, where I was very well received (but since, as I told you, there has been a complete rupture, aggravated by one of those letters which I know so well how to write when I am in a rage).

And here I am, wandering about with my shawl. It seems that the material is really very lovely, but that the antiquity of the design is an invincible obstacle to its sale. All the same, I thought, after all, with 300 francs time can be gained, and I shall easily get the original 300 francs in the office of the pawnbroker, who lent me them TWICE before. I go back; a hundred francs. Inexplicable, isn't it. I insisted on knowing the reason. They tell me they are loaded up with cashmere shawls towards the New Year, and that they are trying to discourage people from bringing them. Net result of my speculation; a loss of two hundred francs.

These hundred francs are all I have had since our separation. I am *without a paper*, threatened on the first of the year with *an enormous crisis*, obliged to live, and overwhelmed with the fatigues that result from what I call my *sudden impulse*. I mean my accursed candidature; not to

mention those which result from a woman who is always sick, who must be encouraged and consoled, and to whom I cannot easily give money unless I leave Paris. Yet *I have sworn* that I will not let myself fall into one of those horrible states of depression in which you have so often seen me, and that I shall try to face all these things together. But how, I don't know.

You must evidently be imagining that I want again *to steal from you.* Never! Nor even to begin again to bring pressure to bear on Ancelle! Joyfully I would sacrifice all my fortune if that could finally pay for my *calm and liberty;* but to go on gnawing, nibbling at the capital without obtaining some definite result, that I will not.

What then? you say. Could you find any objects in your house on which I could try again (more happily) the speculation of the shawl? Two conditions are indispensable: *they must be objects which are absolutely* USELESS *to you and which have no sentimental value of any kind.* In that case, it would be as well to give me some information as to their approximate value; for I only really know the value of *books, pictures* and *engravings.*

I shall write to you later in regard to the phases of my ridiculous attempt (always the Academy); I must, according to de Vigny, dig out two or three other Academicians who would vigorously champion me. De Vigny, whom I have never seen, was marvellous. Certainly birth gives virtue, and I believe great talent implies great kindness. As for me, I am too unhappy to march in the direction of kindness, and if I live, I think I shall finish by writing some atrocious book which will cause me to be driven out of this frightful country.

Lamartine paid me a compliment so monstrous and so colossal that I dare not repeat it, but I think I must not have too much faith in his fine words. He is a bit *whorish,* somewhat prostituted (he asked me for news of you; it was

a kindness I am grateful to him for; after all, he is a man of the world).

Your dear letter which so touched me, because it was so touching, only saddened me. It is very painful to feel impotent to assuage, console and comfort those one loves. That certainly is one of the most painful afflictions to bear. And it fell at such a cruel moment.

I must write many letters before midnight and it is now four. I must leave no stone unturned and write to a good many people before the 30th. I shall stop my visits for some days, *it is not possible to do otherwise.*

If I can by work set myself straight in January, making *my ambition* march straight ahead, I shall leave Paris after I have completed my visits. I think the election will take place at the end of January or the beginning of February.

I embrace you. Take me for the most unhappy madman in the world, but not as ungrateful, nor incapable of love.

Charles.

17*th March*, 1861.

I no more need your advice on *honesty*, than *I need put my hand on my heart.*

Generally, I hide my life, and my thoughts and my anguish, even from you.

I cannot and I will not enlarge on my grievances. Firstly, it would take 50 pages at least, and then, I should suffer for 50 pages.

I limit myself to saying this.

Considering my character, which you know only in part, sensitive, prodigal, violent, putting pride first, *is it likely I should commit an act of barbarism through pure avarice?* Avarice! But what have I done for seventeen years, if not forgive? (I admit the woman was beautiful, and my indulgence might be suspected of being interested.) But when old age and illness struck her, what did I do for three years?

I did what human egotism but rarely does. I even brought to my charity the enthusiasm of my pride.

Two days after the catastrophe, I wanted to send away a meddlesome and insolent servant, who bought old wives' remedies and went counter to the doctor's orders. Jeanne showed me that it was I who ought to leave and that she would keep the servant. I went away, but I went on walking the streets to find her money.

Another example: one day at Honfleur, some three years now, I receive a letter from her complaining that the bill of her nursing-home has not been paid and that she runs the risk of being turned out. Furious, I write to Malassis, who had promised to pay for me. He replies, sending the receipt of the railway company. Then I write a most insulting letter to the company. They reply by sending the receipt of the manager of the nursing-home. I was made ridiculous. Jeanne had, in her poor child's imagination, invented this means of making me pay twice over, without caring in the very least for the distress her lie would cause me, without caring for the ridicule in which she covered me, without caring for the quarrels in which she might involve me.

Such are women, such are children, such are animals. Yet animals have no books, no philosophy, no religion, therefore no honour. Thus they are less guilty.

I got money out of you some eighteen months ago, and I got money out of Ancelle, with which to settle down in Neuilly, and when I went there to live I found a brother who for eighteen years had never come to his sister's help, and who, by his continual presence, showed me clearly he was not aware of my poverty. I use measured terms—so I left.

Last January something quite monstrous happened which made me quite ill. I said nothing to anyone. I do not wish to say anything, it would tear my breast.

Some few days ago, Malassis told me that Jeanne had

come to ask him to buy some books and drawings from her. Malassis is not a dealer, he prints new books. There are in Paris several hundred dealers in old books. I suspect vaguely that she chose Malassis to intimidate me, wound my vanity. It is all one to me, if she chooses to sell souvenirs which every man leaves with a woman he has lived with for years, but I had the humiliation of having to supply my publisher with vague explanations such as those you constrain me to give you now.

The beginning of your letter makes me think that you must have been deceived, you think yourself more generous than me. Yet when I told Jeanne that thenceforward she must count on some other person, I had just given her all I had, trusting in my genius and my star to gain what I needed.

If you yield, here is the danger. Next month, next week, you will receive a new request and so on indefinitely. At the time I learnt from Malassis of her determination to intimidate me, I thought, "If, shortly, I can acquire some money, I will send HER something, but in so strange and roundabout a fashion that she will never guess it comes from me. For, if she guessed, she would take my weakness for a right I acknowledged and an encouragement to go on thinking so.

So you see that I am by no means a ferocious beast.

Your candour and easy deception, your simplicity and sensitiveness, make me smile. Do you think that, if I so wanted, I could not ruin you and cast your old age into poverty? Do you not know that I am eloquent enough and wily enough to bring it about? But I restrain myself, and, at each new crisis, think: "No, my mother is old and poor, I must leave her in peace; I must draw from myself the energy necessary to get free."

I know nothing more stupid than *pure feeling*, which is the one inspiration of women and children. Feeling drives the child, if he is energetic, to kill his father for a pot of

honey, or to buy laces for a harlot, if he is eighteen; it drives the woman to murder her husband in order to buy jewels or keep a fancy man, exactly as it drives a dog to turn everything upside down so as to grab a scrap of meat. As for that most simple consideration, "My caprices or even the satisfaction of my needs must not inconvenience the liberty of others," that is only comprehensible by *men.*

You must forgive me for playing the pedant and misanthrope with you. I am certain of all I affirm. I received a frightful education, and it is perhaps too late now for me to be able to save myself. But what is quite clear to me is that women only become interesting when they are very old.

That brings me to Madame Bâton; she has three graces and yet is not grateful. She is OLD, therefore she is rid of her stupid passions; she is ALONE, therefore she has no account to render to anybody; she is RICH, therefore she has more facility for increasing her intelligence. Let her adopt the virile passions, knowledge or charity. Really, I have not the time for sympathy with fictitious miseries.

As for Madame de Montherot, I knew she was at Honfleur, through one of my friends, the editor of *l'Illustration.* As I know that you are always wanting to lend my room, I betrayed a certain terror, but he replied I could be at ease, since she was too much of a nonentity to want to disturb either books or engravings.

I have just written to Jeanne. Therefore, do not answer her. I find I must put off for another day the bother of writing of myself and my affairs.

I persist in wanting to return to Honfleur, but how much I must do first!

My academic outbreak has done me no harm. There were various incidents that I must relate to you.

It goes without saying that I am not interested in the election for *Scribe's* chair, which is put off till April.

My only grudge is against M. Villemain, whom I shall soon make *publicly* aware of the fact.

M. Biot is dead and will be replaced by M. Littré.

I am so backward in news for you.

My letter of withdrawal, before the election for *Lacordaire's* place, made a certain sensation in the Academy, *not bad.*

I embrace you.

Charles.

29th March, 1862.

My dear mother, I must beg you very urgently to come to my help, *if you can,* for the end of this month. I promised my landlord 300 francs the day after to-morrow. (*Above all things, I must have peace here.*) I meant to give him the 375 francs *La Presse* owes me (*the manner and the matter of M. Villemain,* three articles ordered, finished and sent in). The discussion of the *address* * has gone on so long and has so filled the newspapers, that there will be no room for some time for literature. But that is all over and my three articles will appear in three parts in April, week by week doubtless. If you can do this, I shall send you back the money I meant for the landlord (in parenthesis, I consider myself bound to send back to you as soon as possible 500 francs, since at the New Year you sent me back the 200 I had repaid you). *We will arrange all that when I am with you.*

I assure you that there is no disorder in my life. Every day order becomes more and more part of it. I am sad, resigned to everything, even to suffer to the end of my life, resigned to the conseil judiciaire, and decided to do merely what must be done to have it revoked. I shall have four volumes to publish this year, and would wager they will pass *unnoticed.* No one does me justice. As soon as I have concluded the sale of these volumes, and placed the articles,

* *The address to the Academy.*

some finished, some not yet finished, which will complete them, I shall return to you. I do not need even to raise money in order to do so. I shall leave a power with someone to receive money in my place and use it to pay those to whom I destine it.

The *Poems in Prose* will go in *La Presse*, 1,000 francs! but alas, *it is not finished.* The *Dandies littéraires* will also appear in *La Presse* and, *perhaps, les Peintres philosophes.* I must stay in Paris to finish all that. And then, to conclude, I believe Hetzel will buy from me the book rights of the *Poèmes en prose.*

The money from all these things is allocated in advance.

I have still two other resources, but less certain than my work. How many years of fatigue and punishment are needed to learn the most simple truths; for instance, that work which is so disagreeable is the only way of not suffering, or suffering the least, from life!

It seems I must provide Ancelle somehow or other with a little more than 1,000 francs in order to effect the conversion. That is a great nuisance; he would have done much better to sell out and use the money elsewhere. I beg you not to help me in this matter.

So I shall return soon, not in order to economise (as you so brutally insinuate), but *for the pleasure of being near you,* and of living among *decent folk.* I must say that the longer I live the more fatiguing and oppressive does all society and conversation become.

You will find this letter less wretched than the others. I do not know from what source my courage has returned; yet, all the same, I have no reason for rejoicing in life.

Not long ago I read at Flaubert's several chapters of his new novel, it is admirable. I had a feeling of fortifying envy.

Hugo is going to publish his *Misérables,* a novel in ten volumes; another reason why my poor volumes *Eureka,*

Poèmes en Prose and *Réflexions sur mes Contemporains* will be ignored.

To have passed the age of forty and to want to pay my debts and make a fortune out of writing in a country which wants only variety shows and dancing! What a ghastly fate!

You reproached me with having shown no love in my last letter. But, dear mother, you must remember that by your questions about Jeanne you awoke intolerable memories in me.

Always be indulgent and be sure that your indulgence will never be wasted.

Do you need Chinese blinds? I have found some at five francs each. Is that dear? I did not buy them.

You expressed a desire to have *Les Mémoires d'outretombe* of Chateaubriand. I got them for you; do not thank me, I had them for nothing.

Lately I have suffered *horribly, horribly,* from rheumatism, so I long earnestly for very hot weather.

You do understand, do you not, that if I stay in Paris for another fortnight or a month, it is not uselessly. How on earth can I make researches into painters and engravers at Honfleur? Or find the masses of books I need for my critical articles? Please God, all that will come to an end. And at Honfleur I hope to find and invent new forms for my works of pure imagination.

Favourable or not, your letter will arrive the day after to-morrow at 8 a.m. This man is in difficulties and has a sum to pay at 10. I am terribly afraid of seeing an inferior being, on whom I depend somewhat, look ill at me. If you are favourable it is understood that the *Villemain* belongs to you. With every number (there will be three) you will receive the price of the article.

I shall again send in advance a *new box of pictures and engravings* (my only amusement) doubtless the third week of April.

I embrace you. Soon we shall be having long, long talks.

Charles.

Do you want your Chateaubriand now or will you wait?

Another matter for ill-humour. I have waited now two months for the publication of four articles in the *Monde illustré.*

As for *l'Illustration,* for seventeen weeks they have promised proofs by Monday, always next Monday!

I am wretched at having given that important work to an illustrated paper. No one ever reads them. But at that moment I could not squeeze in anywhere.

A moment will come when I shall find myself with manuscripts in five or six quarters; how very exhausting. And then all the proofs will come in at once.

I tremble lest the discussion of the budget take up too much room. But, thank God, then there will be a respite for some time.

(As to *la Presse,* they do not pay in advance; I feel I owe you that slight explanation.)

Charles.

Saturday 24th May, 1862.

My dear mother, to-morrow, Sunday, I will write to you at length and minutely in answer to your two letters. I will send you one of those long letters in which all that has been kept back is poured out.

You guessed right. Things move very slowly and I must absolutely bathe in solitude again. I fly Paris chiefly to fly all society. So I do not want to find again at Honfleur that form of Parisian torture, and I will not prostitute myself to anyone, neither the Mayor nor the Curé nor M. Emon, nor any others whose names I have forgotten.

To-morrow I shall tell you about my visit to Fontainebleau, which, despite the kindness of my sister-in-law, proved very painful. A whole day with Ancelle! Can you imagine

what that is? With a man who is at the same time mad and stupid.

And then, the PHANTOM of the conseil judiciaire arose three times during the day, in the presence of a clerk of the court, a lawyer, a solicitor, and I know not who else. Ancelle no doubt enjoyed my humiliation; he had dragged me there without any warning. I have never been malicious, but I feel that would be enough justification.

Till to-morrow! I embrace you and love you.

I have the *Chateaubriand.*

Charles.

As for the new *les Misérables,* I fear I shall not have the courage to ask for them. The Hugo family and its disciples fill me with horror.

6th June, 1862.

My dear mother, I thank you. I am wretched at having hurt you. I cannot so easily give up my plan of coming to Honfleur; I had already taken a room in another district. I shall cancel it, by paying.

What a strange letter you send me! Do you not yet know that Ancelle is to me the worst scourge imaginable, and that he is responsible for quite two-thirds of all the accidents of my life. His name stands in my mind for the *ghastly wound of my life,* and he personally is utterly intolerable, the perfect type of the dawdler, laggard, lubber, and disorderliness. You had forgotten what I think of him. That business at Fontainebleau was simply horrible.

Finally, as a last chance, I sent him your little note. I would have liked to forego completely the 500 francs. I would rather have had that than see and hear him *stammer slowly for hours, "You really have the kindest of mothers. Do you really love her?"* or *"Do you believe in God? There is a God, is there not?"* or else *"Louis Philippe was a great king. Some day they will do him justice."* He spins his phrases

out for half an hour each, during which time I am expected in various parts of Paris.

Thus there will be delays, long delays, in the matter. I would have liked to leave to-morrow, Saturday; but I can do nothing while I am uncertain.

So you thought I was *incapable of ordering a suit* by myself? So we are still very far from the abolition of the "conseil judiciaire." Was it the exquisite *elegance* of Ancelle which convinced you?

You cannot imagine what frightful misadventures* I have encountered in regard to various articles, some of which are *finished*, and, better still, *already accepted*.

What a life! but I shall avenge myself, I shall avenge myself for everything, like a man who loves nothing and who execrates his country.

I embrace you and I shall write to you.

Charles.

17*th June*, 1862.

My dear mother, all goes well and the delay is not due to Ancelle, but to my tailor, who is very dawdling, and to my need of seeing a number of people to arrange about *work* and *payment*.

All the same, I shall pack my trunks.

All my stories, rage and humiliation, I put off to another day. The age becomes more and more idiotic and vile.

All my thanks and love I put off also.

Charles.

**The genius of Baudelaire was at this point most unpopular, and he was aware of it. Always in want of money and, in his pursuit of perfection, always rewriting, it happened that with the best faith in the world, the poet would send to reviews as if unpublished, things in prose and verse, of which only the form had been modified. Indeed he would reprimand haughtily anyone imprudent enough to introduce or omit a comma, in his texts. Thus arose his incessant quarrels with editors on whom, alas, he depended. When he went to Belgium he had all but broken with most of his friends.*

Sunday 11th August, 1862.

Dear mother, you are dull, maybe, and perhaps, very much so. I shall arrive soon. I have taken every precaution, I mean that I have myself made it impossible not to leave at the end of the month.

There are, I think, few examples of a life as badly in pieces as mine; what is certainly curious is that the fact gives me no pleasure.

I do not want to tell you (besides, I have not time) of the extraordinary combats of myself with myself, my despair, my dreams. Nor do I want for the hundredth time, to tell you again that you are the only living being who interests me. It seems to me that since I have said so, you must believe it. I feel that I am now at a crisis, a phase, where I must make a grave decision; I mean, do exactly the opposite of all I have ever done; love nothing but glory; work without ceasing, even *without hope of recompense,* suppress all forms of pleasure, and become what is called a fine specimen of greatness. And finally try to make a *small* fortune. I despise those who love money; but I am horribly afraid of servitude and poverty in my old age.

I shall arrive, or rather I shall arrive home, the 31st, the 1st, the 2nd or the 3rd. Since you love me so much as to want only to apply yourself to what interests me, I shall be able to repay you and prove that I know you, that I love you, that I can weigh up and appreciate a mother's heart.

Well, anyhow, I think that at the end of the month I shall be able to fly from the horror of the human face. You could not believe to what a degree the race of Paris is degraded. It is no longer that charming and kindly world I knew in the past, the painters know nothing, the men of letters know nothing, not even spelling. All have become abject, inferior I think even to society folk. *I am an old man,* a mummy, and they hate me because I am less ignorant than other men. What decadence! Except d'Aurevilly, Flaubert, Sainte-Beuve, I can get on with no one. Théophile Gautier alone

understands me when I talk painting. I have, I repeat, *a horror of life,* I must fly the human face, and above all the faces of the French.

I have a very fine book to bring you, and I am hard at work on this subject: *Seconde tableau de Paris par Sebastian Mercier, Paris pendant la Révolution de 93 jusqu'a Bonaparte;* it is marvellous.

You will doubtless have received *les Misérables,* which I did not send you (waiting till after Easter) supposing (wrongly perhaps) that you would not wish to read novels till after Easter; and two articles, one mine, one by d'Aurevilly. The book is beneath contempt and stupid. I demonstrated, in regard to it, a great ability to lie. He wrote an absolutely ridiculous letter by way of thanks. That proves that a great man can be a fool.

Your Chateaubriand (the Belgian edition) has got lost somewhere in the offices of the Minister for the Interior.

I shall pay you back your money after my visit to you.

I have still three weeks before me in which to make arrangements with *La Presse, Les Débats, le Monde illustré, La Revue britannique,* etc., so that it may be possible for my debts to be paid, despite my absence.

I love and embrace you. Tell me you are well (if it is true) and that you will live a long time, a long time still, for my sake and only for my sake. You see I have the ferocity and egotism of affection.

C. B.

I shall spend to-morrow at Fontainebleau. How very tiresome!

Monday 22nd September, 1862.

My dear mother, for some months now I have wanted to write to you. I owe you many explanations, such as why I did not leave Paris, what I am doing, when I shall leave, etc. But the days are so full of various happenings and so short; a few pages written, some errands, and then it is

night. Besides I need a certain state of happiness in which to write to you. But my habitual condition is rage. Thus, to-day I write from the offices of *La Presse* (where I at last thought myself firmly established after spending eleven months as a free lance) and now I am tortured here, *really tortured*, and it may easily happen that I shall cancel the publication of what remains of the *Poèmes en prose;* enough for fifteen issues.

And yet *money!*

For that is the whole question. I do not want to leave behind me money complications which may have some repercussion at Honfleur.

I could fill twenty pages to you if my mind were free. But I write to you to ask your permission not to write except when I can.

My plans for returning to Honfleur are complete, but they are ceaselessly thwarted by accidents impossible to foresee.

I promise I will write again this week, but truly, my mind is not free enough to do so to-day.

My sister-in-law sings your praises, which in no wise surprises me.

I embrace you very lovingly.

I have divers things to send you, but cannot say when the parcel will be made up.

13th December, 1862.

How comes it to be so difficult to write to one's mother, and to be so rarely done? So simple a thing, and one which should be so gratifying. And yet it is so difficult to do anything that is kind and one's duty. And the multitude of cares which increases with age prevents the satisfaction of what one recognises as a duty, even a pleasant duty.

But, my dear mother, above all, above everything, *How are you?* If you could hear my thoughts from a distance, how often you would say to yourself: "Now my son is think-

ing of me!" But all that is words merely and poetical suppositions. You would much prefer me to prove my zeal to you.

How harsh you were to me in one of your last letters! Those cruel 500 francs! The one thing that struck me as really serious in your letter *was the cliff*. But I always imagine you will understand everything. Could I imagine so many bricks would fall on my head the very moment I thought of leaving? For instance, Malassis' bankruptcy, which you have no doubt heard of, and in which I was all but compromised, and which in any case has caused a complete upheaval in my life. I owe 5,000 francs. I mean to hide them from the law, so as to be able to give them back to Malassis or his mother later. And then *Les Fleurs du Mal* and *Les Paradis* abandoned to the hazards of auction. But you understand nothing of all that.

I stupidly began my letter by using my paper backwards, so I number the pages for your convenience. Anyone who was superstitious would see an evil omen in that.

I sent you some books to amuse you, good books. The *Lettres sur les animaux* (but for the preface of that imbecile of a doctor) and *Le Neveu de Rameau,* which you know probably, are wonderful. But you did not in the least guess why I sent you the Poètes Français. It was not in the least, as you thought, to show you those old things of mine; it was so that you might read the article of Gautier which concerns me, that is to say, the part he gave me in his history of poetry. Perhaps you never saw it. And the spies? What shall I say of them? What imbeciles! They told you I was happy? Never! Could I possibly be? or perhaps I am and in such a manner as to frighten people and shake them off quickly. They told you I was well dressed? It is only eight days since I abandoned my rags. They told you I was in good health? None of my infirmities have left me, neither rheumatism, nor nightmare, nor my anxiety, nor my unbearable faculty

for hearing every noise hit me in the stomach; nor, above all, fear, the fear of dying suddenly, the fear of living too long, fear of seeing you die, fear of falling asleep and the horror of awaking; and fear of that prolonged lethargy which makes me postpone for months the most pressing things; all most strange infirmities which, I know not how, increase my hatred of all the world.

But tell me of yourself, most minutely, and, above all, of your health.

Some time ago now, *at the time of the* 500 *francs*, I went *all alone, of course,* to Versailles. I adore Versailles and the Trianons. They are most solitary. I could not help, as I walked, thinking of you, and how, years ago, we had made the same journey, from the rue d'Amsterdam as far as Saint-Cloud, I believe. You had then come back from Madrid or Constantinople. I recognised the points of view before which you said with your usual emphasis, "How beautiful it is!" adding, *"But you, you do not feel the beauties of nature."* For it is thus you express yourself. The gardens of the Trianon positively dazzled me, and I imagined you were with me. I saw you, really saw you, making the kind of grimace I know so well, and saying, *"All that is very beautiful,* but you see, dear child, *I love my own garden still more."* Dear mother, I wanted to make you smile.

But, anyhow, dearest mother, tell me of yourself. I am deep in an important matter, but I shall never know how to bring it off. Everyone knows I am overwhelmed by debt. I shall let myself be slaughtered. If in a week, I write all is over and well over, then you can count on my presence and on a more agreeable life.

And if your imagination allows you to divine what I endure, *think of the conseil judiciaire.*

Would you have me die still in a state of tutelage? I embrace you.

Charles.

3rd June, 1863.

My dear mother, I am enchanted that the toy pleased you. It was made with care. It is your New Year's gift, but as with so many other things, it is fearfully behind. Do not lose the *Spectator* article,* the English weekly. Your boudoir is redecorated; that afflicted me at first, because I have for a long time intended to buy you something magnificent; but perhaps it is better so, since all the stuffs that go into it are destined to be ruined by the sun. As soon as you have time, send me *by rail* in one packet only, the three other volumes of Edgar Poe, in the striped binding with green morocco backs; you must know where they are in my library, since you have already sent me one. You know the enormous price the copy cost me, so pack the parcel in such a way that no rubbing can spoil the binding. Post prepaid or not does not much matter. Besides, when you stamp things you often mistake the green stamps (½d.) for the blue (2d.).

You will please me by telling me if any rearrangement has been made of my two rooms, if my documents and files are in the same place, and if the damp has done any damage.

You must have wondered very much why I had not written to you for so long; the true, the only, reason was the discontent I felt with myself, and which you somewhat guessed. I had promised myself never to write to you, until I had shaken off the weight of lethargy which had overwhelmed me for such long months. How I fell so low, to such a point that I thought I could never rise again, how I rose, and was able suddenly to *cauterise* my illness by working furiously with no respite and no fatigue, I know absolutely nothing. *I know that I am completely cured*, and that I am a wretched creature composed of idleness and violence, and that habit alone can serve as a counterweight to all the vices of my temperament. Idleness has become so violent an anguish, the mad idea of my literary impotence has so terrified me, that I have hurled myself into work; I realised that I had lost no faculty, but that it was most dangerous to slumber. There

* *An enthusiastic article by Swinburne.*

are people who hurt us more than they think by saying; *"When is your next book coming out?"* or *"Have you stopped working?"*

This is how I am placed. It is the more necessary for you to understand me since I am absolutely constrained to ask (with your support) for a sum of 1,000 francs from Ancelle, as a present relief, while calmly awaiting the moment in which I shall completely change my life; for I cannot return to Honfleur without having acquitted my literary debts, or at least recovered a permanent habit of work. I can be idle there, as I have been here, and the fear of ennui cannot drive me more at Honfleur than in Paris, where for some months now I have been more bored than anyone in the world has ever been bored.

Such is the state of my literary affairs. Fairly good things done long ago have not appeared, thanks to the stupidity of the editors of papers and reviews, but at least they are done, which is the important point.

I was unable to sell anyone the collection of my critical articles (painting and literature). I must wait for the effect my next volumes will produce. One helps the other. If everything I am doing had been finished in October, I should have been able to publish everything this winter, but now I must finish them at once, so that they may appear in September or October, the usual period for publication.

I have also sold to the publisher Hetzel the *Fleurs du Mal* for five years in a third augmented edition, and *Le Spleen de Paris* for five years; 600 francs for each volume in an edition of 2,000 copies. Thus there will be five editions of each.* . . .

5th June, 1863.

. . . What you say of *Mon Cœur mis a nu* is as disagree-

* *This contract never came into effect. Baudelaire never handed over his manuscript, and Hetzel, who had made an advance, consented to be repaid. This was done after Baudelaire's death by his mother.*

able to me as your repugnance to seeing me the master of a great department.

Well, yes! The book of which I dreamed so long will be a book of rancours. Of course, my mother, and even my step-father, will be respected. Yet while relating my education, the manner in which my ideas and sentiments were fashioned, I wish to make it felt unceasingly, that I consider myself a stranger to the world and to its beliefs. I shall turn against the *whole of France* my real talent for insult. My craving for vengeance is like a tired man's craving for a bath.

And then your admiration for Edgar Poe makes you to some extent forget my own works, which would appear much more considerable if I could reprint them all. I shall never again let you see the wounds you inflict on me. But it is only too true that families, relatives, mothers, know too little of the art of adulation. That is an old observation.

As to the theatre, before a month, or six weeks, I shall have all my information, and assured my protection, and in three years, or one year perhaps, I shall pass through your conseil judiciaire (even if I have to confess it to the minister himself) like an acrobat through a paper hoop.

I shall certainly never publish *Mon Cœur mis a nu* until I have made a fortune large enough to shelter me, outside France, in case of necessity.

C. B.

Why spend forty-two sols in postage, when you know it would only cost 10 or 20 by rail?

Monday 10*th August* [1863].

My dear mother, I am overwhelmed with torments and occupations. You must not reproach me if I answer you briefly.

The matter of the public lectures is put off till November. I had a letter from M. Vervoort, the President of the Cham-

ber of Deputies and President of the Artistic Club, acknowledging my offer for November.

All the same, I believe I shall leave for Belgium on Friday or Saturday, to write for *L'Indépendence Belge,* but above all to finish my interrupted books; I hate Paris and France. If it were not for you, I would hope never to return.

If I leave on Friday, I shall return to Paris after having established relations in Belgium; I shall discuss the question of Poe with Michel,* and I shall come to Honfleur to wait for November.

No reproaches, I implore you. It appears that my poor sister-in-law has a feeble character? But who is not, in some fashion or other, feeble-minded?

It goes without saying that if I am in Brussels on Saturday, I shall begin by writing to you.

In the meantime I embrace you from this distance.

Charles.

21st August, 1863.

My dear mother, I ask your pardon for not having answered you yesterday. It was impossible, as impossible as it was to accept the invitation of my sister-in-law. I was obliged to spend the day in the office of the newspaper from which I write to you now.

Are you so unhappy, and do you suffer so much, dear mother, in your solitude which seems to me a place of happiness, that you are so anxious to come to that Paris which is to me so intolerable?

Do as you wish. I see in your plan a prospect of great joy, that of seeing you. And yet it bothers me a little, for I shall be hardly at all at your disposal. You will always see me sad, uneasy and peevish. I would have wished your journey to be in such conditions as would allow me to give up all my

** Baudelaire abandoned all his rights in the five volumes of his translation from Poe to Michel Lévy, contingent on the receipt of a sum of 2,000 francs.*

time to you, and to devote myself to taking you about and amusing you.

And then, I have an added humiliation. You must be very short of money. And as for some months now, all my plans, even the best founded, have crumbled one after the other, I have not 1,000 francs to offer you, not even 500, not even less. Without doubt, that state of things must come to an end, but when?

With Brussels, only one thing is resolved and concluded, but the Agreement is not yet signed. I speak of my *Conférences publiques,* which begin in November. I shall give, I think, a dozen, at 200 francs a lecture, and I may be invited to other cities. As to the journey I recently planned, its intention was to visit the picture galleries, and write articles in *L'Indépendence Belge.* But I could not come to terms with that newspaper and so did not leave.

As to my definite return to Honfleur, that depends wholly on the understanding with Michel Lévy (who is still absent) and on the amount of money he means to offer me in exchange for all my future author's rights. He returns on the 5th, and another person, whom I await for another affair, returns on the 8th. I imagine that all these negotiations may keep me here till the end of September. I have some hope of spending October at Honfleur, but November and half December I shall probably spend in Belgium.

Now that you know all, decide.

When we are together, I shall instruct you minutely in regard to my affairs. I am not dead (which is most surprising) and I perceive with astonishment these last days that I am still capable of working.

I embrace you.

Charles.

Have you heard of the death of Eugène Delacroix?

25th November, 1863.

My dear mother, I have been wanting for a long time to

keep two or three hours in which to write to you at length and as I should. But the days are so short, I suffer so much after lunch, and after dinner feel such boredom in my unlit room, and I suffer so much from the lack of *friendship* and *comfort*, and am so crushed by solitude and idleness, that I always put off till next day the accomplishment of my tasks, even those I have most at heart.

From time to time, several times a day, at morning, at night, I ask myself, how is she? She is unhappy, and perhaps she thinks that I am enjoying myself.

The main and only object of my life now is to make my work, the hardest and most tedious task in the world, agreeable by force of habit. I look on myself as a great criminal, having abused my life, my faculties, my health, having lost twenty years in dreams, so I am inferior to all the brutes who work every day.

No, there is nothing to reproach me with, relative to the 2,000 francs from Michel Lévy. I shall not even have twenty francs. Lévy has promised to distribute the money among various of my creditors, when he has had the last page of his fifth volume. I am just finishing it.

The fourth has appeared, I believe, but I have no time to go out and see about the distribution of copies.

I shall send you a copy, simply to prove that this terrible book is finished; for I doubt if you could read two pages of it without falling asleep. I doubt even whether there are in the whole of France ten people capable of appreciating it.

M. Aymon is mistaken. I hope very much I shall not stay in Brussels more than six weeks (too long even). I shall leave about the beginning of December. A box I shall send you, will be the signal of my flight. For it is useless to pay the rent of a room I shall never occupy again, and I want to move my furniture out.

My forebodings of my journey are of the gloomiest. That I shall be well paid for my lessons, I believe, but, as you are aware, there is another reason for my journey, that of

selling three volumes of criticism to the publisher who bought *Les Misérables;* here, however, everyone says they are misers and of no intelligence. It is possible I may be obliged to sell them in Paris on my return, for very little. But *the money for the "lessons" is not to be ignored.* It appears that the papers (or talk) have announced my arrival, and that I am expected.

The fragments I send you form part of the three volumes in question.

The *Delacroix* has given rise to much anger and approbation. I am accustomed to that.

I attach a certain importance to the work of which I send you the first number. I am rather unhappy about the notice (signed G.B.), which accompanies it (my serial).

And now, remember that the important thing, that which is always important to me, is your health. Write me about it.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

31st December, 1863.

My dear good mother, there is nothing more disagreeable than to write to one's mother with one eye fixed on the clock; but I want you to receive to-morrow some words of affection from me, and some pleasing promises of which you must think what you may. Mine is the detestable habit of postponing all my tasks till the morrow, *even the most agreeable.* It is thus that I have put off till the morrow the accomplishment of so many important things during so many years, and thus that I find myself to-day in so ridiculous a position, as painful as ridiculous, despite my age and my name. Never has the solemnity of a passing year struck me so much as this one. Therefore, despite the tremendous abbreviation of thought I make, you will understand perfectly when I say: that I beg you *to keep well,* to *take care of yourself,* to *live as long as you can,* and to *accord me your indulgence some little while longer.*

All I am going to do, or all I hope to do this year (1864) I should and could have done in the year which has passed away. But I am the prey of a fearful malady, which has never ravaged me so much as this year. I mean *dreaming, boredom, discouragement and indecision.* Certainly, I think the man who succeeds in curing himself of a vice, infinitely braver than the soldier, or man about to fight a duel. But how get well? How turn despair into hope, how turn cowardice into will? Is my malady imaginary or real? Has it become real after having been imaginary? Is it the result of physical enfeeblement or of the incurable melancholy resulting from the years full of blows, passed unconsoled in solitude and depression. I do not know. What I do know is that I feel complete disgust for everything, and above all for pleasure (that is not an evil), and that the only feeling through which I still feel alive, is a *vague* desire for fame, vengeance and money.

Yet, even for the little I have done, such trifling justice has been done me.

I have found some people who had the courage to read *Eureka.* The book will go badly, but I ought to have known; it is too abstract for the French.

I must certainly leave. I give myself *five* days, *eight* at the outside, to collect some money from three papers, pay a few people, and pack up my things.

I hope the disgust of my Belgian expedition does not seize me the moment I arrive in Brussels! For it is after all an important matter. The lectures, which cannot bring in more than a small amount (1,000, 1,500, 2,000 francs), supposing I have the patience to give them, and the wit to please the dunces, are only the secondary aim of my journey. The real one you know, is to sell and sell well to M. Lacroix, the Belgian publisher, three volumes of *Variétés.*

I shudder when I think of my life there. The "lessons," *the proofs from Paris to correct,* proofs from *newspapers* and proofs from *Michel Lévy,* and finally, on top of all that, I

must finish my *Poèmes en Prose*. All the same, I have a vague idea that the novelty of my stay may do me good, and produce some activity.

I have spoken too much of myself, but I know you love that. Tell me of yourself, *how you feel* and *of your health*.

I had intended to make Hugo an accomplice in my enterprise. I knew that Lacroix would be at Guernsey a certain day. I asked Hugo to intervene. I have just received a letter from Hugo. The tempests of the Channel upset my scheme, and my letter arrived *four days after the publisher had left*. Hugo says he will repair all that with a letter, but nothing is worth *speech*.

I embrace you with all my heart.

C. B.

Before leaving, I shall send you a trifling present, probably a book you will like. It is already chosen.

3rd March, 1864.

My dear mother, I must really write to you or else you will think there is some mystery. Your imagination is ridiculous. The explanation is much simpler. It is simply because my poems bored everyone (so the editor of the paper told me) that their publication was interrupted.

I have fallen into a hideous lethargy. Not only are my books and articles of all kinds behindhand (both promised, and paid for), but I am overwhelmed with urgent matters, three of which are in Belgium. And then it hurts me too much never to see you. I am going to try to amend my character, look to what is most urgent, dig up some money from two or three sources, so as to pass some days near you, then finally turn my steps towards Brussels, where it may be new mortifications await me, but perhaps also much money.

I embrace you and I implore you not to invent stupid imaginings. There are already more than enough legitimate motives for sadness in my life.

If I could only stay at Honfleur from the 10th to the 15th, it would do me a world of good.

Charles.

VII
LETTERS WRITTEN DURING BAUDELAIRE'S STAY IN BELGIUM.

(1864–1866.)

Brussels Hotel du Grand Miroir,
Rue de la Montagne.
Wednesday 6th May, 1864.

My dear mother, I have had to spend two days in the country with certain ladies. And yesterday evening I found your excellent letter, which had arrived the evening of the 3rd. You will have this (which leaves this evening) tomorrow night. A night and a day.

Here is a notice of my first lecture. They say here that it was an enormous success. But, between ourselves, everything is going very badly. I came too late. There is an immense avarice here and infinite slowness in all things, a huge mass of empty heads; and, in one word, all these people are much more stupid even than the French.

No credit, no kind of credit, which is perhaps very lucky for me.

I give another lecture next Wednesday. The winter funds of the Group were exhausted, they told me, and as the real reason of my journey was to seduce the publisher Lacroix into buying three volumes, I accepted a sum of 50 francs per lecture (instead of 200 or 100). Unfortunately, Lacroix was in Paris. I have just asked to be allowed to *give three others free of charge* during the time he will be back, but have said nothing of my real purpose.

I have had letters written to the Groups in Antwerp, Bruges, Liège and Ghent, to inform them of my presence here. The answers have not yet arrived.

The trial will not take place. Ouf! that was one of the things which tormented me most.

In the provinces the lectures will produce 80 or 100 francs each.

I shall have fulfilled my purposes, or at least done all that I had to do. I wish to have nothing on my conscience.

My purpose is:

Get money (as much as possible) by lecturing, and contract for three volumes with Lacroix.

And then, before anything, finish the works I have begun (*le Spleen de Paris, les Contemporaines*).

You see I shall be very busy. If I lecture in the Provinces, that may, of course, prolong my stay until the end of June.

So go to Paris, and, *I beg you, for mercy's sake,* TAKE GREAT CARE OF THE TRAFFIC.

I accept your offer of 50 francs, as the distrust here makes it impossible to live except by paying cash for everything Don't worry too much over the Ancelle affair. If I sell my three volumes, and if I sell them well, I will repay some money, and cancel the arrears in one blow.

You don't say whether you received the case, for which I enclose the *receipt.*

I think that a 50 franc note in a registered letter would be better (economically) than a money order for 50 francs. The expense of a money order is fairly heavy. For the rest, French orders are payable in Belgian post offices and conversely. (There is a 50 franc banknote now.)

I love you with all my heart. The more because I know how I make you suffer. I promise to write often.

Charles.

Saturday 11*th June,* 1864.

My dear mother, you are not in the least forsaken, but you are a woman, and nervous, and I have a horror of writing to you when I have nothing but sad things to write to you. For the rest, I am frightfully occupied. I am stuffed

with anxieties for the future, about Paris, and *a book* which is being printed *in my absence,* and the proofs of which I receive very *irregularly;* in fact, without counting all my woes, I have been constantly ill, *physically* and morally, for the last six weeks.

To come at once to the subject of your letter, I say *yes,* because I feel that *that will give you pleasure.* But it is completely stupid. My only desire is that no one should touch the portfolios. I do not even know where all the papers are now, literary papers, business papers, etc., nor do I know what I have done with my keys. I shall return rather later to Honfleur, that is all. It is not to avoid my sister-in-law, but, frankly, I have the right to a little rest, and I should be too uncomfortable. Tell me when my sister-in-law is to arrive and how long she will stay.

At last I think the turn my affairs are taking will keep me rather longer than I thought. I wanted to leave on the 20th, but here I am, forced to earn my living, and as I cannot pass through Paris without paying out money, I thought I would write a book on my journey, arranged as a series of letters, which will appear, probably, in the *Figaro.* Then I shall re-sell the book. That is courage, but I shall have to go to Antwerp, Ghent, Liège, Namur, Oudenarde and Bruges; I must see and question, and if you knew the brutes I have to deal with!

(Can you, once more, without completely disorganising your poor budget, send me a small sum, 200 or 100, or even 50?)

Once we are together again, I want to do everything, everything possible, to better my fate and save myself; because I *will no longer endure the conseil judiciaire,* I wish to spend my life working and pleasing you, *and I will not die in misery.*

Now here is the account of my sad epic (sad up to the present) and judge for yourself if the fault is mine.

I came here for a *publisher,* to offer him three volumes

for five years, and to ask him for 20,000 francs, or the highest possible price per edition, in view of a number of editions.

The five lectures were given for him alone. He received five invitations and did not come.

The lectures (the last took place on the 23rd), though frightfully long, double the usual time, two hours instead of one, had such a success that no one remembers anything like it. At the beginning, I played the magnanimous part. When terms were mentioned, *"arrange that as you like; I do not know how to discuss such matters"* was what I said. They replied vaguely it would be 100 francs. They told me they would write to the Liège, Ghent, Antwerp, and Bruges Groups, but there was such delay that the season is now over.

On the 24th an official came from the *Group* with 100 francs (instead of 500), plus a letter, which, taking my apparent disregard for money too literally, informed me that as it was the end of the season the funds were exhausted, but that they would bear me in mind, and pay me the following year. So you see how these men of the world, lawyers, artists, magistrates, people seemingly well educated, positively steal from the stranger who is within their gates.

What is to be done? *No agreement in writing.* Here dishonesty dishonours no one; it is called clever. To give the money to the poor would be an insult to the *Group* and set them all against me. In fact, I needed money frightfully; and when on the 24th I paid my hotel bill, I was 3 sols short.

Perhaps you think that my misfortunes ended there. Not at all.

Quite suddenly a rumour spread that I belonged to the *French Police! ! !* This infamous rumour came from Paris and was started by one of the V. Hugo band, who well knew Belgian stupidity and its credulity. It is revenge on account of a letter I had published in Paris, and in which I made fun of the famous Shakespearian banquet. Perhaps you

don't understand. Well, the publisher in question is V. Hugo's publisher, and I am inclined to believe that he did not come to the lectures because he was warned against me.

But still I must make an end, and shall play my last card at the *lecture* I have organised myself, in the house of a stockbroker who is lending me his drawing-room.

I have just written a sixth invitation to the publisher Lacroix. Also to the Comptroller of the King's household, at whose house, by the way, I was politely received. I want the best people. I want obvious reparation for the stupid defamation.

It has cost me something to write you all this. I love you and embrace you.

Your last letter was not properly stamped. Do not force me into debt with the concierge.

You will have this letter tomorrow, Sunday evening; if you reply on Monday before five I shall have your letter Tuesday evening.

Charles.

And Fracasse, did he amuse you? There are astonishing beautiful things in the book.

I saw Antwerp. It was *superb*. But the people are more gross even than here.

All is perhaps not lost. Who knows?

Thursday 16th June, 1864.

My dear good mother, my excellent mama, thank you for your registered letter, which I received only yesterday morning, Wednesday, although it had arrived on Tuesday evening. Here, in case of a registered letter, the Postmaster notifies you to that effect and you yourself go and fetch it from the Head Office.

I put off my answer for a day, because I hoped to give you news. I have just left the offices of Lacroix, Verbœckoven & Co. Nothing. I shall get no answer till *Thursday next*. I do not believe it will be good. I shall go to bed at

nine every day, get up at five, and write a small volume of reflections on my voyage.

I did not want to see Lacroix, a man who ignored *six* invitations and did not even send an excuse. I went past him just now, in his office, without even saluting him, and spoke only with his partner, Verbœckoven, the son of the famous Belgian painter.

And the famous evening! ! ! Ah, that was funny, funny enough to split your sides laughing.

I am trusting in my *lucky* star, and working. . . . Before to-morrow evening I want to write you a four-page letter, slowly and at ease. I am convinced, I cannot get out of my head the idea, that Lacroix got his orders from Paris; and thus, that I have enemies. What an honour! but, heavens! how have I deserved them?

You cannot imagine how immensely wise you were in giving way to your generous impulse.

I embrace you.

Charles.

My stomach and sleep are still out of order. What about you?

Friday 17th June, 1864.

My dear mother, it is 6 o'clock. I was wrong not to write to you this morning. I have made a great decision. I no longer see anyone. The Frenchman, one of my friends, with whom I could laugh at these wretched Belgians, has left. I am alone; I get up early, and I work.

On Thursday, I shall know my fate.

Here is the account of the famous party. There were fifteen people invited by me, five of whom came, the best, though not influential, and of the others two only, the Comptroller and the Editor of *l'Indépendence Belge,* sent letters of excuse. Also of fifteen people invited by the master of the house, only five came. Picture to yourself *three enormous rooms,* lighted with lustres and candelabra, hung with the

most superb pictures, an absurd profusion of wines and cakes; and all for ten or twelve *rather miserable* people.

A journalist, leaning towards me, said, "*There is in your work something* CHRISTIAN which has not been sufficiently noticed." At the other end of the room, on the sofa where the brokers were sitting, I hear a murmur, and they are saying, "He says we are cretins!"

That is a specimen of Belgian intelligence and manners.

Seeing I was boring everyone I stopped my lecture, and began to eat and drink; my five friends were ashamed and full of consternation. I was the only one laughing.

You were most clever, as I told you; 100 francs to my hotel, 50 to a shoemaker who was bothering me (it is impossible to get into debt here) and 50 francs put by for everyday expenses.

I am in an unbearable state of nerves; but I think of the horrible future; I wish to have God and chance on my side.

I embrace you.

Charles.

There was, it is true, a shareholder in Messrs. Lacroix who came to the lectures, and it was he who arranged the interview with Verbœckoven which took place yesterday, Thursday. But Lacroix has the power, I am afraid.

If I finish my study on Belgium, you will see some funny things which no one has so far dared to say.

31st July, 1864.

My dear mother, I demand another month in Belgium before settling in Honfleur. I have started this confounded book and it must be finished. I have made all my notes on Brussels, and five chapters are written, but I shall have to go to the provinces; a fortnight will be enough. Liège, Ghent, Namur, Antwerp, Malines, *Bruges* above all, will be a relaxation. I have calculated that I can do the journey

cheaply, 150 francs will be enough. Railway fares are dear, but the places are not far apart.

I am forced to invoke your kindness again, if it is at all possible (for I always feel towards you like a timid child). I will do all I can to bring back in September part of the money for the *Letters*. If you cannot help me, I shall think of some means, how exactly, I do not yet know, to carry through my plans and provide for my expenses, small as they are. My three important present needs are, to pay a little money to the hotel, to go to Paris and conclude several urgent affairs, and appease with something on account a creditor who is martyrising me (to go to Paris makes me shudder). Latterly, to meet certain needs, I have been obliged to make the acquaintance of the Mont-de-Piété (pawnshop) in Brussels, and now I need the things, to make my tour of the provinces; but that is *less* urgent, for I still have quite 10 days' work on my Brussels' notes.

My *Letters* cannot bring in any money now, since I have carefully debated the problem with a Frenchman and have decided, even if the matter be concluded, not to have them appear *so long as I am here*. The Letters will be very humiliating to Belgium, and a man celebrated for quite other reasons, M. Proudhon, *was stoned* from here, for having allowed himself a few very innocent pleasantries in some newspaper. I think it would be a good thing to spend 24 hours in Paris, throw myself into the jaws of the wolf, so to speak, conclude the business of the Letters with the *Figaro*, find a publisher for it in book form, find a publisher for the three volumes which I came to Belgium to sell; those are the important things. Is it possible that my name has no longer any value, and that these books, full of strange things, can remain unsaleable? No, it is not possible. And yet, I am so discouraged that sometimes I am inclined to believe it. Ah, if I could only raise my spirits and my health, I would revenge myself on this gross nation, while

waiting for the time when I should have authority enough to say what I think of France itself.

(It was on the 23rd of June that I learnt from M. Lacroix's partner that my proposal was rejected. It was politely stated, and supported with many reasons which later I proved to be *lies*. Afterwards he asked me for a novel. What hypocrisy! He knows that I have none.)

The thought of going to Paris frightens me, and yet it is the most honest and perhaps the surest way. I write so many letters to which no one replies. If you knew the rage one feels in being completely isolated, shut up in a hostile atmosphere, without conversation, without any possible pleasure, and when no one of those you need will answer you!

I am surprised to have done as much as I have (taken all my notes, put together the first chapters, corrected the sheets of a book which is being printed in Paris), in the state of body and mind I have been in for the last two months; never have I known such boredom and weakness. Three months of *continual diarrhœa*, punctuated at long intervals by unbearable constipation, does not tend to strengthen the spirit. As to my palpitations and sudden pains in the stomach, they have disappeared, I know not how. For the rest, there is nothing original in my condition. Several Frenchmen I have met have been taken with this same diarrhœa, which I attribute to climate and drinking *faro*.*

Everyone goes back very quickly to English beer or French wine. The carafe of faro costs 2 sols, English beer 30 sols, and Claret 3 francs a bottle.

As for my illness, that went on, and the only benefit I derived from it was extreme sobriety. Even if I were well, I should only eat with disgust here, the cooking is so insipid and monotonous. I wager you are going to send me a pile of medical recipes, which I do not want. I will get well in September.

I think I should do well to summon up courage to go to

* *A special beer peculiar to Belgium.*

Paris. I sent some articles to the *Vie Parisienne,* but no reply; to the *Opinion Nationale,* but no reply; to the *Monde Illustré,* but no reply. Truly people cannot imagine the agony felt by a man hemmed in by a tiresome people, deprived of the information he must have.

I will send the end of this letter later. In any case, I am not in any hurry to send it. I should like to write of more pleasant things.

I hope I shall not be obliged to go to Paris. It bothers me so much. One of my friends, on his way through, said he would take it on himself to put the question to the *Figaro,* and even get me some money from them, imposing as a condition that the Letters do not appear until my return.

C. B.

8th August, 1864.

No answer from Paris, not one, not one!

On the evening of the 3rd, I received, rather late, an advice from the post office asking me to collect a registered letter. Now this is how things happen here with regard to registered letters. I had not written to anyone asking for money. On the 4th, in the morning, as I was unable to say who had sent the letter, it was refused me. You see that your letter, even had I been absent, could not be in danger. Then I thought that no one in the world but you would send me money before I asked for it, and so I took some of your old letters with me, and when they saw the writing was the same, your letter was handed me.

Those 50 francs were wonderfully gracious, and I was most touched. But now you understand my hesitation in answering. Was I to destroy the letter I had begun? The 50 francs were maybe a privation, a sign you were in difficulties, and yet I reflected that after all you would forgive me for exposing all my worries, and that since you meant to diminish little by little my debt to M. Ancelle, perhaps you might think it more important to help me in my present situation,

for, after all, M. Ancelle will be able to pay himself back easily enough when I am with you once again.

I have such a longing to be in my room, and see all my papers and prints again! But sometimes I become so wretched that I imagine I shall never again see Honfleur. Do not take this for an omen. They are ideas I have only in my worse moments.

I go on with my letter. It will be a long one. If I have so much neglected you, it is firstly because I cannot bear to go into my unhappy feelings, and then, because I knew that doubtless my sister-in-law is with you. She is intelligent, and adaptable enough, I imagine, to bend herself to others, a thing I altogether lack.

Would you believe that I who know nothing of history, and in any case, cannot endure it, have had the patience to read 2,400 pages of an undigested and pointless book, just to get some idea of the history of this wretched people! A sad history, too.

Since the 11th of July, there has been great agitation. The Chamber is dissolved and they are getting ready for the elections. It is a hideous sight. The workmen of Paris are princes in comparison with the princes of this land. In spite of my disgust, I attended several electoral meetings. I had the joy of seeing M. Lacroix's candidacy fall through, in a club where he was insulted *a la Flamande,* which says everything; for three hours I had the vulgar pleasure of hooting with his adversaries. The position of deputy must be most enviable, most glorious, since they will swallow such insults!

I hoped there would be some firing in the streets. But that is a Frenchman's idea. These people would only fight, I imagine, if the price of faro or potatoes were to rise.

I told you, I think, that I had made it up with M. Malassis.* That is a great thorn out of my flesh. I have also gone back to M. Hetzel, who passed through Brussels, and

** Baudelaire still owed 5,000 francs to Poulet-Malassis, and feared he might cede the debt to a third less accommodating party.*

gave me until the end of September to deliver the *Fleurs du mal,* enlarged, and the *Spleen de Paris,* which I shall finish at Honfleur. Oh, what joy, when that is finished! I am so worn out, so disgusted with myself and everything, that sometimes I imagine I shall never be able to finish this book, so long interrupted; yet which I so lovingly thought of doing.

As for the *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses,* they are getting on, and will appear in September. I have corrected six signatures out of ten.

I want to finish my letter this morning, the 10th. You will probably not understand anything of my long silence.

I am even writing to Paris again to-day, first to a literary agent commissioning him to sell my three volumes, *Paradis, Contemporains;* secondly, to one of my friends to beg him to remit to the creditor of whom I am so afraid the money for the articles left with the *Vie Parisienne.* I doubt if he will be able to.

As for the LETTERS, I am afraid I shall be obliged to arrange the matter myself.

Do not forget to give my love to my sister-in-law. She probably thinks (I am forced to think that people believe anything of me) that I have no affection for her. But at least I should be extremely grateful for her care in lightening your worries.

In one of your letters, that which followed my thanks for the 200 francs, you were worried about my expenses. Here is the exact situation.

I received 100 francs from the Art Group, 50, 200 and 50 from you, 200 from Ancelle; 600 francs in all.

I must spend every day:

Room two francs, lunch two, dinner two francs fifty (without wine): six francs fifty; wine three francs; with wine, nine francs fifty.

But I do not spend more than seven francs, because, if, on the one hand, I drink wine, on the other hand I do not eat, and *for a good reason.*

So at this rate I should have spent seven times 115 (there have been 115 days already!), that is to say, 805 francs.

Yet, on the 7th of July last, I only owed 155 francs. But since I have paid nothing to the hotel.

There are some very lovely things here in pottery and porcelain, and more than once they have made me think of you. That is just like me, isn't it? To think of buying things when I am so bothered for money! But the Belgian shopkeepers are greater thieves than any others.

If my Paris agent succeeds in selling *any how* my three volumes, what a relief for the rest of the year!

The *Lettres Belges* will suffice to get me out of my present hole, and even enable me to bring something back.

I embrace you, not only as my mother, but as the only creature who loves me.

Charles.

You do not stamp your letters, at least not sufficiently.

Sunday morning, 14th [*September*, 1864?]

But, my dear mother, *it is more than I expected.* So there will be enough for my three projects. A thousand thanks.

You speak of dieting very easily. Everything is bad here except the wine. *The bread* is bad. Meat is not bad in itself, but becomes bad by the way it is cooked. The people live better in their houses, but the hotels, restaurants, the public houses * are all bad. I must say, too, that the state of disgust I am in makes me think everything still worse.

Malassis has taught his cook a little cooking. If I did not live so far from him,† I think I should really make an arrangement to eat regularly with him.

I am going to try cold enemas with laudanum.

What is unbearable in these stomach and intestinal

**Taverne à l'Anglaise.*

†*Poulet-Malassis then lived in rue de Mercélis 35 bis faubourg d'Ixelles.*

troubles is the physical weakness and low spirits which result.

Decidedly, I think I shall go to Paris on Thursday.*. I shall write either from Paris, or from here on my return.

Must I really believe that all the articles I so painfully wrote on painting and poetry have no monetary value? When I think of all the filth and nonsense which sells so easily!

I wish to find out why my articles do not appear in *L'Opinion*, the *Vie Parisienne*, the *Monde Illustré*, and why the *Vie Parisienne* has not sent 400 francs to the man I told them to.

The woman I was expecting so impatiently from Paris has come at last. She tells me my Letters were accepted gladly. I never doubted it, and I am much advanced; not knowing how much I shall receive for each letter or if the paper means to take certain ones only, or if it will consent to pay me in advance, *and not publish them until I am back in France.* None of these questions have been discussed.

I embrace you closely. Remember me to my sister-in-law.

Charles.

Monday September 22nd, 1864.

My dear good mother, it was utterly wrong of me to write to you about my Belgian health, since it so much affected you. Has anyone ever heard of a mother of your age wishing to start on a journey because her son's digestion is upset by a bad climate? Generally speaking, my health is excellent, since I have had no real illness. If I do suffer from some few trifling infirmities, rheumatism, neuralgia, etc., what does it matter? It is the common lot. I must put up

* *We shall see him again and again announcing and putting off his arrival. Undermined by the illness which killed him, he was already stricken with a kind of torpor, which fixed him in one place. There was only one visit to France (7–16 July, 1865) in all the time between his first departure for Brussels (April, 1864) and the day when his friends brought him back suffering from aphasia. (1st or 2nd of July, 1866).*

with it. As to my sickness, I repeat I have seen other Frenchmen taken in the same way and never succeed in adapting themselves to this beastly climate. Would you believe it, the cold weather is already back, and after a few days of wet stifling heat, summer again departed?

Anyhow, I have only a little while longer to stay. I am putting off my journey to Paris until the end of the month. The more manuscripts I bring with me, the more chance I shall have of making money. As to the five or six towns I have to see, I am sure a week will be enough. I could write that part of the book in Paris or Honfleur. There is no need to tell you that if I decide to have the beginning published before my departure, I shall let you know.

I went to Malines. It is an extraordinary little town, very devout, very picturesque, full of churches, silence, grass, and a perpetual music of bells.

I should be very happy if I could send you, at the end of the month, a little good news.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

Until I have the contracts for my four volumes, *Belgique*, *Paradis artificiels* and *Contemporains*, I shall be restless and bad tempered.

Tell me how you are. You rendered me an immense service. I thank you yet again.

Sunday 1st January, 1865.

My dear mother, I have no need of the solemnity of this day, saddest of all days in the year, to make me think of you, and think of all the duties and responsibilities which I have heaped upon myself for so many years. My first duty, the only one in fact, will be to make you happy. I think of it continually. Will it ever be granted to me to fulfil it?

I think sometimes with a shudder that God might suddenly take that possibility from me. I promise you, first, that this year, you will not have to endure from me any demand

for help. I blush to think of all the privations I must have imposed on you. I will even try to return a little of the money this year. I promise you, too, that I will not let one day of the new year pass without working. Surely reward must come at the end.

My mind is full of funereal thoughts. How difficult it is to do one's duty *day by day* without any interruption! How difficult it is, not merely to think out a book but to write it without weariness, in fact to have courage each and every day! I have calculated that everything I have had in mind for so long would not have taken more than fifteen months of work, had I worked assiduously. How often have I said to myself, "Despite my nerves, despite the bad weather, despite my terror, despite my creditors, despite the weariness of my solitude, have courage! Your reward may come." How often already God has given me 15 months' credit and yet I often interrupted, too often, even now, the execution of all my projects. Shall I have time (presuming I have the courage) to put right all I have to put right? If at least I were sure of having five or six years before me! But who can be sure of that? That is now my obsession; the idea of death, not accompanied by silly terror, for I have suffered so much and been punished so much that I feel much must be forgiven me; but hateful since it will annihilate every project and because I have not accomplished one-third even of what I have to do in this world.

You have probably guessed how terrified I am of the idea of going through Paris without any money, or of stopping in Paris, my hell, for even six or seven days, without being able to make a definite arrangement with some of my creditors. I do not wish to return to France unless I can do so *gloriously*. My exile has taught me to do without every possible distraction. What I lack is the energy necessary to uninterrupted work. When I have it I shall be proud and calmer.

I have good hopes of that. I have charged someone in

Paris with my literary affairs; I think I shall soon have some news for you on that score, and I believe people are beginning to take note of me.

You know all the details of what I have available for publication, alas! how much is behindhand!

1. *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses.* (That will appear after the fuss of New Year's Day. Michel will send you a copy.)
2. *Fleurs du mal* (enlarged).
3. *Spleen de Paris.* (I went back to it, as you saw by the number of the *Revue de Paris* I sent you.)
4. *Paradis Artificielles.*
5. *Mes Contemporains.*
6. *Pauvre Belgique.* (It is in respect of these last three works that I so anxiously await answers from Paris.)

As for a series of *Nouvelles* and *Mon Cœur mis a nu,* I shall do them when I am near you. Those will be the great days of maternal love. I hope they will not be days of premature age!

Write me minutely of your health, I beg you. The colds? What is this weakness in your legs and back of which you wrote latterly?

Let me know fully. It seems to have struck you for the first time since you never before spoke of it. Does Aimée continue to give satisfaction? *

I embrace you very tenderly, with all the effusion of a child who loves no one but his mother.

I will bring you two or three trifles you will like.

Charles.

Friday 3rd February, 1865.

My dear mother, I have caught an awful cold, which has made it impossible for me to think or write for several days now.

The letter you wrote me at the beginning of January moved me intensely. Can you imagine the effect on me of

* *Mme. Aupick's servant.*

hearing that you had escaped a danger, and of learning at the same time of the illness and recovery! It seemed to me I also had just escaped some very grave danger. I will not hide from you a very shameful feeling I had, one that was very egotistical. I was very glad you had hidden the illness from me, for I should have suffered too much in knowing of it. But is your recovery real, quite definite? Write me about it. You tell me you feel better than you have felt for a long time, that you are walking and eating, and that fills me with joy; but are you really taking all precautions against a relapse so as to keep this new health?

I was therefore full of security; as to you, at least, although I knew well you were bored; and also full of confidence in your patience and courage. And then suddenly your other letter came, the one in which you speak in such a terrible way of your boredom, your solitude, your discouragement, and of Paris, too. It made me most wretched. Still you did well; for I love to know all you think, even when it is disagreeable. Besides, your letter made me ashamed. It is obviously my place to console and entertain you. Never have I been so unhappy at being unable immediately to do the thing I wished. Had I been able to leave immediately I should have done so. But how? Even if I had much money I should not leave. It is not only a question of Paris, and my business there; a question of literature. This month, I really think, I shall have important news: and when I write of my books having been sold, you can say to yourself, he is ready to return to Paris; and when I write to you from Paris, you can say, he is coming back to me.

I know well, by my own experience, the horrible torture of boredom. I consider myself here as in prison or doing penance. I hope to complete my penance and leave. I assure you that the prison of Belgium is harder for me to bear than Honfleur for you. You are in a pretty house and you see *no one*. But I have no books, I am uncomfortably lodged, with-

out money, and only seeing people I hate, ill-bred people, who seem to have invented some special stupidity for themselves; and every morning, trembling, I go to the concierge, to know if any letters have arrived, if my friends think of me, if my articles are appearing, if any money has come, and if the negotiations for my books have been concluded; but there is nothing, never anything. Ancelle, whom I asked to do three things for me which I consider important, has not written for a month (don't let that make you think you must write to him). I cannot tell you what I would give to be able to clink glasses with a sailor, a convict even, so long as he were not a Belgian, in some cabaret in Havre or Honfleur. While as for seeing that most cheerful house in which my mother, my books and my collections live, that is a joy I dare not even dream of.

I omit, from the list of my worries, the letters from creditors in Paris, the only people who do write to me. And then I think the manageress of the hotel is beginning to look strangely at me again.

(With reference to my collections, tell me how many unopened cases of mine you have still; is it one, two or three?)

And then, are the walls damp?

What astonished me most in your heart-rending letter was your idea of seeing Paris again. That weird dream proved you are well. And that was all the consolation I found in it. But otherwise, what amazing madness!

At this time of year! In a deluge of water, mud and snow! Paris is only beautiful in sunlight, and among her gardens. After all, think of me a little, how worried I should be to know you, old and alone, in all that chaos. I myself am always frightened there! Really, I should not be able to sleep.

It is 5 o'clock. It is better to write you imperfectly than not write at all. I embrace you with all my heart, and I will try hard to write to you twice a week.

The *Revue de Paris* is going to bits. Another loss of money, not only for all they still have of mine, but for the little which has appeared.

Charles.

Saturday 11th February, 1865.

My dear mother, I have been rather dilatory in answering you because I hoped to be able to send you some very good news from Paris, but nothing yet, except some more bad news. After the *Revue de Paris,* which is in a very bad way, there is trouble with the *Figaro,* from which I was expecting 400 francs. The *Figaro* absolutely refuses what I had had sent them, because it is too much above the heads of its readers. It is probably a polite way of telling me it is uninteresting. The unfortunate thing is that the parts sent to the *Revue de Paris* and the *Figaro* are taken from my fifth volume of translations from Edgar Poe, and, as the book is about to appear, I shall not have time to place them elsewhere.

As I think I told you, feeling that I should always manage my affairs badly myself, I commissioned one person to deal with all my literary affairs, in consideration of a fee, which goes without saying, payable on the results of such sales. I waited first for a reply, "yes" or "no," and then "it will be so much per cent." No reply at all. Silence gives consent, so I conclude he is looking after my affairs and that he is waiting to let me know his conditions once the first transaction has been concluded. Now I wonder have I chosen my man wisely. That is the question. I chose someone who had been agent for other authors, and who is a publisher himself; but happens to be in rather a bad way. It was just because he was in trouble that I chose him, hoping that he would see in my literary destiny a means of making some money for himself. (I am sure, you will perhaps think me too conceited, that however few works I leave, they will sell very well after my death. As to the author's rights, unless

I disappear before you, there will be no one to inherit them. That will be very profitable for the publishers.) *

I no longer dream of fortune. I dream of nothing but paying my debts, and of being able to create twenty books or so, the frequent editions of which will ensure me a more or less regular income; except for some universal upheaval, it is as sure as having stocks or shares. How I regret the ridiculous transfer I made of my translation rights for 2,000 francs cash, of which I was unable to touch one penny for myself. Those five volumes were an income of approximately 400 to 600 francs a year, in spite of the smallness of my royalty. To such folly can creditors drive us. I shall never again make such a sale, unless for an enormous sum or an annuity.

Yes, you are right a thousand times about the seven years. No, Ancelle could not have paid my debts with 14,000 francs, but as you say *we should have lived very happily*. Oh! the terrible phrase!

I know perfectly well the theory of ill-luck which you quote, and also I know myself thoroughly.

The *dangerous virtue* is to have a more sensitive spirit, more delicate, or more elevated than have the majority of one's fellows, comrades, the mass, in fact.

The *still more dangerous* vice is cowardice, discouragement, and the habit of letting the years fly past while putting off everything till the next day. When I am quite overwhelmed with work in arrears, occasionally I find courage, which proves I am not entirely without strength. My courage is violent, but not sustained. But when one has already against one superior minds, it needs all the more *patience, obstinacy* and *assiduity*. I am completely in possession of the science of life, but I have not the strength to put it into practice.

Do you understand now why one sees so many authors who

* *They sold very badly at that time. For less than 3,000 francs from the publisher.*

are not even mediocre succeed so well and gain so much? They have everything in their favour, their mediocrity to start with, and then all the chances their assiduity gives them.

I cannot say how often you have spoken of my *facility*. It is a much used term only applicable to the superficial. Facility to conceive? or facility to express? I have never had either one or the other, and it must be very patent that the little I have done is the result of very painful effort.

From time to time I work on my "poèmes en prose."

[*February*, 1865?]

. . . according to the reply I shall finish the book without sending anything to the *Figaro*, or very much to the contrary, I shall write to the *Figaro: Publish at once* (in spite of my original reluctance to publish a satirical book on Belgium while I was still in Belgium).

There, my dear mother, are all the explanations of my behaviour. That is why I did not write to you. I await important answers from Paris, and I wished to have pleasant news for you.

That is also why I said, two days ago, *do not write to M. Ancelle*. The good man thought he was doing well in what he did. He has been rather clumsy with the best of intentions.

How are you? That is the great thing to me, and what I look for first in all your letters.

As for myself, it seems I am acclimatized; at any rate, at the end of a very long time, I am well again and would gladly eat, if it were possible to eat with pleasure in this country. But, in revenge, the season for rheumatics has come back.

The *Histoires grotesques et sérieuses* are at last to appear. But the *Spleen de Paris*, that accursed book on which I counted so much, is hung up half way. Oh! how impatient I am to be at home! It is certainly very dangerous to leave work for long unfinished and do several things at the same

time, for the train of thought is often lost, and it is impossible to reproduce the spiritual atmosphere from which one started.

You will get this letter on our "jour de fête." I cannot send you anything, but a repetition of my longing to live with you. Never were we bored together, and I think we should be as happy as it is permitted to be.

Charles.

15th February, 1865.

At last, it is almost finished, my dear good mother. I have nothing very much to say, and I only write about my wretched head, because I know your unfortunate imagination. Last night, for the first time in ten days, I went out, my head wrapped up in a handkerchief like a cabby. Unfortunately, I behaved like a child who has been on diet for a long time; I had a small orgy, composed of oysters, a steak (!) and half a bottle of wine. It seems it was too much. This morning again I had a few shooting pains. But since I am writing it means that I am well. What a devilish incident!

And now here is the news from Paris. I had launched a third friend * in pursuit of the two others. One of them I had commissioned (TWELVE DAYS AGO) to give the fragments, taken back from the *Reuve de Paris* and *Figaro,* into the hands of my friend, the business man. They are worth a lot of money, and I am penniless. However, my friend replied that he had received nothing of the kind, and that, if he had had them, he would have placed them. . . . It is unbelievable! Anyway, I prefer bad news to no news at all. Silence exasperates me. I am writing to him at once on the subject.

With regard to the more important matters, he replied that he was very seriously occupied with them, and that before replying to me he was waiting for the *promised fragments* in order to write about them all together and that he

* *Edouard Manet the painter* (*see the letter to Julien Lemer, 4 July, 1865*).

was hesitating between two publishers, Amyot, a very well-known publisher, and a young and new, but very daring, publisher; and that he rather leant towards this last.* All that disturbs me. What interest can he have in the latter? With my name, my position and my age, I am interested personally in confiding my books only to publishers of good standing. But, anyway, that must all solve itself. I have very carefully considered all the ideas you suggest. The thing which worries me most is to know, supposing matters are arranged, at what price he will put his services. I should have preferred him to have spoken of that first.

How are you? Remember what I begged you, amuse yourself whenever you can.

Charles.

MM. Lacroix and Verbœckhoven (whom I came to Belgium to see and who dismissed me so strangely after having calumniated me) have just asked someone else to do a book for which I had given them the idea.† These Belgians! Oh, these Belgians!

Thursday 9th March, 1865.

My good dear mother, your impatience and anxiety hurt me. I do believe my impatience is no less than yours.

This is all I know. One of my friends went to see the man in question, M. Julien Lemer, boulevard des Italiens, who said that he was sure of getting a fairly good contract from one publisher or another (one being new, the other old and very well known, Amyot, rue de la Paix), but that he was waiting for the rest of the manuscript, *Mes Contemporains,* to be able to say for certain that everything was arranged. Perhaps they will even insist on my going to Honfleur to find the first part of the same book. I told them there were only three fragments missing: *Chateaubriand et le Dandysme littéraire, la Peinture didactique,* and *les Fleurs du Mal jugées par l'Auteur lui-meme.* Since then, as a result of cer-

* *Alphonse Lemerre.*

† *The translation of Melmoth by Maturin.*

tain circumstances, I have added a refutation of an article by J. Janin on *Henri Heine et le jeunesse des poètes* and a refutation of *la Préface de la vie de Jules César par Napoleon III.**

I do not even deign to send these last fragments to any paper. I may be wrong, but I am sick of papers. I am convinced that a man of intelligence can never be understood by a newspaper editor.

All the fragments of which I speak have been started, but not one is finished. This frightful winter of February has done me a bad turn. Even for a long time after my recovery I still felt a dull pain over my right eye; but my impatience spurs me on to work!

Yes, I am going on with *Poèmes en prose.* In any case, I must, since I contracted for them two years ago,† and also that *les Fleurs du Mal* would not appear until after the *Poèms en prose.* But I write so slowly, so very slowly. The atmosphere of this country is deadening, and then as you could guess, in reading the 40 or 50 which have appeared, the making of these trifles is the result of deep concentration of the mind. All the same, I hope I shall succeed in producing an unusual book, more unusual, more as I want it at least, then the *Fleurs du Mal,* in which the fearful will be allied to the clownish, and even tenderness to hate.

Great news! I have just learnt that I owe nothing more to Ancelle. I am level with him. It is to you I owe it. It is always to you I owe everything good that comes to me.

How can I repay you?

Nothing new. I have heard nothing in regard to the fragments of Edgar Poe (*Marie Roget* and *Habitations imaginaires*) belonging to the book which is about to appear. Are the fragments disposed of, or must I renounce the 600 or 700 francs they represent? If you knew the torture it was, when

* *Of all these fragments, only the reply to Jules Janin has been found.*

† With Hetzel.

one is anxious to get news relating to money, not to receive any!

I received a letter on February 21st from Michel Lévy, who tells me that he is tired of waiting, and *that he is going to put my book on sale.* So I must give up worrying. I have not even received the miserable 100 francs which the *Revue de Paris* owes me. I don't think it will last beyond March.

I have another important job on the horizon, about which I shall write to M. Julien Lemer.

I think I told you something of the new infamy of Messrs. Lacroix towards me. It is a question of a translation those gentlemen ordered from Mlle. Judith (not the daughter of Th. Gautier),* the idea of which *had been suggested by me.*

It would be a sacrifice of two months of my year, but it would mean also a large sum, and *legitimate revenge.*

I hope to be able to write to you about this at the end of *next* week.

I wager you have written to Ancelle to ask him to meddle in my literary difficulties. Such maternal blunders make me love you the more.

I embrace you.

Charles.

Thursday 4th May, 1865.

My dear good mother, despite my sincere resolutions of New Year's Day, I am obliged to have recourse to your kindness yet once more, *if it is at all possible.* For nearly a month now I have been thinking of this necessity; it humiliates me, and if I have hesitated for a long time, it is not only because of the reluctance I had to tell you of it, but also because I did not want to trouble you during your Easter devotions.

I shall have to go to Paris, to discuss my business myself; I must go to Honfleur to find the beginning of one of my books (I shall bring the conclusion with me); I shall have

* *The actress at the Théâtre-Français.*

to return to Paris to settle my affairs somehow (I am not satisfied with the offers which have been made me, and hope to drag more out of them), and lastly I must return to Belgium, where this time I shall not stay more than ten days.

The journey will take at least a week. But on what can I make it? The landlady torments me, and I promised, *without knowing what I said,* payment *by Saturday.* Further, I lack *everything,* particularly *linen.* I will not, nor can I, apply to Ancelle. First, it would be useless, and then I am very anxious to keep the formal relation of the last four months.

I could, it is true, accept what is offered. But how much longer will these negotiations by letter drag on. I am offered 1,500 francs (the book on Belgium *not included*), and it is just the sum I need to rid myself of Belgium and return to France. But, I need very much more for my creditors in Paris. Lastly, how can I leave even for a week without leaving a large deposit here on account of what I owe. They would take me for a thief, I fear.

I owe for November, December, January and April. In February and March I paid all my expenses.

Evidently I shall not be able to bring any money to Honfleur on my first visit. The one day I shall stay in Paris will not be sufficient to settle matters. I hope to be able to finish on my return visit. Allow me to believe I shall have enough foresight to pay you back first what you will have sent me; but, in any case, the fine weather has arrived, and if I do not repay you I shall no doubt deprive you of that journey to Paris you so dearly cherish. That is a reason to force me to remember.

Paris fills me *with great terror;* but the necessity of discussing my affairs myself will restore me my energy, and the sight of Honfleur, if but for 24 hours, will do me a great deal of good. I have fallen into a real decline. I have no longer the courage to work at my book on *Belgium,* nor on

the *Poèmes en prose*. When I see a traveller's trunks being put into a carriage, I think to myself: there is another happy man! He can go away! The two or three Belgians whom I found for some time *comparatively* agreeable, have become *unbearable* to me.

I forgot to tell you that it will be necessary, supposing you can send me money for my hotel bill and purchases, for me to reserve enough to pay my four railway journeys. For I do not know whether I shall have time or the cleverness to get free passes in Paris.

I think five or six days will be enough to get some shirts and shoes made here. I shall leave, therefore, *at the latest* on Sunday, 15th. I shall pass the 16th in Paris. I shall be in Honfleur the evening of the 17th, and want to arrange things in such a way as to be back in Brussels on the 21st, so as to devote the last ten days of the month to *finish* with this country, where the few beautiful things one must see do not compensate for the horror and disgust caused by the inhabitants.

It seems that it is very difficult to come to an understanding by letter, or else that it is very difficult to get a suitable price for volumes of criticism. Five hundred francs per volume obviously only represents the price of one edition. My desires were very clearly expressed. Being in need of a great deal of money for my creditors in Paris, I wanted to cede the rights in four volumes for a period of five years, that is to say, to receive in one sum the royalties of all probable editions during five years. For the publisher it is a gamble in which he might gain or lose. I am certain the arrangement would have been very easy to make had it been a question of novels. But books of criticism! Anyway, I want to argue it out myself, and I am sure that I shall derive, if not several thousands of francs, certainly a little more than they are offering.

I send you two other articles as stupid as the one I have already sent you. Many others have doubtless appeared;

but I have not seen them, particularly one which was immensely long in the *Revue germanique*. When I was younger, articles concerning me excited me very much. To-day I am quite indifferent to them.

You wrote me, my dear mother, some very lovely, very kind things in your last letters. You must imagine how much I have thanked you for them. In regard to what interests you most in the world, I mean your son, I can say that as a man he is now the steadiest, the most reasonable, and the best reasoner, that exists, with regard to money, happiness, work, etc., but by I know not what enfeeblement of will he cannot put these excellent ideas into practice. What I know best is that I must definitely work a great deal (and here I can no longer), grow used to solitude, and do without all pleasure, except that of work (I do not find it difficult to go without pleasure, since it has bored me for a long time now); in fact, to think important fame only and the perfection of my mind. There are many people who consider, or who pretend to consider, fame as an *empty* thing. For myself, I admit quite simply that it seems the most sure and solid possession in the world, but also perhaps the most difficult to acquire.

You doubtless heard this year of the death of M. Lacrosse,* and last year of that of Mad. Orfila, who had so many funeral orations in the papers. I did not dare to tell you at the time.

How are you? Do you remember how you frightened me when you told me the state you were in, through not having called in a doctor?

You have probably heard of Sainte-Beuve's appointment as a Senator. Despite my intimacy with him, I think it would be well for me to write and congratulate him. I believe he deeply despises official honours; but he is poor and old. Now he will be rich. But his habit of work is so strong that I

* *Bertrand-Théobald-Joseph Lacrosse, the senator who had spoken in praise of General Aupick in the Senate.*

wager he will continue his enormous work on the *Constitutionnel.*

Such a curious thing, M. Ancelle needed a power of attorney from me to get the money due to me by the Labie family.* What a bore! a Belgian solicitor, four witnesses, the Ministry for the Interior, the embassy, all that used up my last 20 francs.

Do not forget that *you must not* put on the envelope: *Hotel du Grand-Miroir,* but simply 28, rue de la Montagne, Bruxelles.

The words *Hotel, etc.,* force the receiver to go to the G.P.O. with papers stating his identity. In the other case, the postman delivers to the person himself.

Don't be too angry with me, I beseech you. I assure you I shall find the activity and the exactitude necessary for this business journey.

I embrace you tenderly.

Charles.

Monday 8th May, 1865.

My dear mother, your letter written on Friday only reached me yesterday, Sunday morning. There were various hindrances which got in the way of my answering you yesterday.

As I read the beginning of your letter I felt full of penitence for having written to you. Yet I have such longing, such need to go to Paris and Honfleur, that I grasp at the half-offer you make me. Not knowing your position, I left it open to you at first, to guess approximately what I needed, and to send what you could. Now I give you the figures you demand. Only, I insist, that my most sincere *desire* is to pay you back this money out of the proceeds of

**Solicitor in Neuilly to whom M. Ancelle succeeded. Baudelaire's tiny fortune (about 75,000 francs, then some £3,000) had for a long time consisted in property situated at Neuilly. The debt in question no doubt had to do with the sale of this property.*

the sale of my books, which will be concluded before the end of the month. You are free to laugh at my promise. But I remember also that I have often given you the right to do so. Now, *if you suppose me able to forget you, under the terrible pressure of my creditors,* think that in June, definitely installed at Honfleur, I shall be able to give up to you my monthly allowance, since I am now free (again thanks to you) on that score.

The winter months at the hotel cost about three hundred francs; those of summer, two hundred and fifty francs. Thus about three months ago I was 900 francs in arrears, plus a sum of 250 francs on the 1st May.

I have just been talking with the landlady. I continued to promise to pay her something on account, but I have not yet dared tell her I proposed leaving for a week.

I think that 500 francs on account would be magnificent.

I am forced to add another hundred francs to buy linen and other things, and a hundred for the journey. That would not be quite enough were I not sure of getting free passes once I am in Paris.

And now, if this enormous sum will too much inconvenience you, send me what you can, but quite definitely, even if I have to escape from here, I shall go to Paris to discuss my business, and to Honfleur to embrace you and collect the scraps I need.

I have a hundred things to write to you. But I prefer to tell them you. I shall doubtless soon have that pleasure. What fantastic things you write about Sainte-Beuve! Do you think me a scullion? And you think that I should seriously court him, be prudent, and cunning, with a man who in spite of my relative youth, has always treated me as an equal. I have already quarrelled with him ten times, for despite his age he is even more touchy than I am. Finally, you think that his new dignity will augment his literary influence; extraordinary error! As for me, who know him through and through, I can assure you that even though I

shocked all his ideas, he would always do anything I asked him, if it were possible.

I *was forced* to dine at Mad. Hugo's yesterday, with her sons (and had to borrow a shirt). God! How ridiculous a once beautiful woman is when she shows she regrets she is no longer adulated! And those little gentlemen whom I knew when they were little, and who want to run the world! As stupid as their mother, and all three, mother and sons, as stupid, as heavy, as their father! They plagued and worried me a good deal, and I let them like a cheerful fellow. If I were famous, and were afflicted with a son who aped my faults, I should kill him for horror of myself. But as you do not know how ridiculous all that set is, you cannot understand either my laughter or my rage.

You are well, are you not? I have just space enough to tell you that I embrace you. I shall leave four or five days after your letter arrives.

Charles.

Thursday evening, 11*th May,* 1865.

My dear good mother, I thank you exceedingly for what I received this morning. That makes yet another 200 francs to add to the numerous sums I have had from you for 23 *years* now. I feel how much I tire you, and how impatient you must be to see me put into effect the marvellous plans I have so unceasingly spoken of. But I fear very much whether you understand my plans. I myself had some difficulty in understanding your letter of this morning. Does the letter mean: "Arrange things as you can; discuss, *by letter,* your affairs in Paris, and come to Honfleur when you are able. I am to-day sending all I can?" Or is there some misunderstanding between us? In that case, I send you roughly the contents of my last two letters. *"To go to Paris, there to discuss my affairs myself* (to that end buy a few things in Brussels, and pay *a large sum on account to the hotel*); *go to Honfleur to collect the fragments for the completion of the*

three first volumes I wish to sell; return to Paris, to settle everything immediately if possible. To send back to you as much money as I can. Return to Brussels, spend ten days going through Belgium, and at last return, and for ever, to Honfleur."

Your two hundred francs, of which I was obliged to spend sixty immediately (for I was lacking in certain indispensable articles), at once created for me a disagreeable adventure. The cursed female who keeps this hotel, and who is half mad, though she has an excellent memory, learnt (probably from the concierge) that the postman had gone up to my room. As soon as she saw me, she rushed at me. I was obliged to tell her that I had just received a sum less than I expected (I am very anxious to keep the remaining hundred and forty francs for my journey), and brazenly told her that I was to receive another sum, though, truth to tell, I am not at all sure as you say nothing clearly about the matter.

I beg you not to think from my letter that this is merely an obsession. I merely wish to say that you have not understood what I wrote you, and that I find your letter obscure.

If I must escape to Paris with 140 or 100 francs I shall do so, but it is horribly unpleasant to me to be thought a humbug or a cheat. I know how all these imbeciles will think.

I beg you, do not cry, nor get this on the brain! Because I have become more indolent, more heavy, in a country of brutes, where everyone is half asleep, is that so very surprising? Or that I wake from time to time and long to deliver myself from this foul people, what is astonishing in that? I am sure, my name has lost none of its value in Paris. That is the important thing. Many people in Paris think that I am still in Paris, so easily do rumour, idle gossip, and "they say's" pass from one country to another. If I really can transport myself to Paris, I swear to you that I will see no one except those whom it is absolutely necessary for me to see.

I thank you a second time with all my heart, but, I beg you, tell me if what I asked you is, or is not, possible. The fact that you do not count on early repayment is all the better. I shall have the pleasure of astonishing you more.

As to leaving on the 15th, you understand that that is now impossible. Had I all the necessary facilities I could not leave till the 18th or 17th.

I embrace you many times, very much, and thank you once again.

Charles.

Tuesday 30th May, 1865.

My good, dear mama, nothing at all has been altered in my plans. Besides, I absolutely must speak to several people in Paris, and also I must go through all my papers in Honfleur. I shall leave very soon; but the manageress of the hotel has kept on promising me a sewing woman for my linen for ten days now and the one I at last found has not yet finished her work. Then I had a sudden attack of neuralgia (a mere nothing) and in the stomach. I doctored myself like a horse, and am now pretty weak as a result of a series of purges. I busy myself by slowly adding to the heap of *Poèmes en prose,* since, while awaiting the conclusion of my business, I should not be averse to making small sums in Paris on account of unpublished articles.

You write, dear mother, things to make me weep. Shall I find you then *very old, very, very old?* What do I care? I know that I shall never be unhappy near you. I shall only reflect painfully that I was mad not to pass all these last years near you. I have criminally deprived myself of these last years.

Mad. Bâton's voyage pleases and torments me; pleases me since it will amuse you, worries me because of the fears you express. But really, the lady cannot be so foolish or indiscreet as to demand a perpetual motion, beyond her strength, from an old friend.

If I achieve my aim of installing myself at Honfleur at the end of June, I swear that I shall not budge for at least six months, not even to make small business journeys.

I embrace you and beg you to forgive me all my faults, all my cowardice, all my laziness. I am not mad, I am not ungrateful. I hang back, and I am full of remorse.

Charles.

You are not, *as your habit is,* to let the indispositions of which I speak become an obsession to you. It is very bothersome, that is all. And this time the neuralgia has not gone to my head, nor my heart. Those are the two intolerable places.

Your letter dated Saturday, 27th, only arrived yesterday, Monday, 29th.

Saturday 3rd June, [1865].

But really, my good, dear mama, it is sheer madness to love folk to such a point! It makes me ashamed. But I shall not speak of my ailments to you again. You know that for many years I have been subject to rheumatism and neuralgia. It is painful, that is all. They are not illnesses. As to the constipation, which follows my diarrhœas, and the great drawback of which is that it sours the character, there must evidently be some way to diet myself, which I shall do when I am at peace.

Yes, I shall leave soon. But would you believe that now I feel afraid, afraid of what? Of the fear of not succeeding! There is the explanation of the indecision which has always done me such cruel turns. And yet it is obvious that in order to finish anything, the first requisite is to begin it.

I remember how often in Paris I have stayed away from home for a week lest I should find disagreeable news on my return. It is shameful, but invincible.

All I need is, I think, merely to eat rye bread with all my meals. It is only slightly irritating, which is better than

purging. But to ask for that at the hotel would be to be thought a madman.

Even at the beginning they thought me mad, because I asked for a *big* table to write at, and a *big* room to be able to walk in.

Soon I shall see you, and I embrace you, angry and miserable at having upset you.

Charles.

Actually, I am well.

Brussels 26th July, 1865.*

I assure you, my good dear mother, that your complaint is unjust. First, I was going to write. Secondly, was it not agreed that I should only write to you of certainties? But I am as uneasy as yourself. There is no torture comparable to that *of not knowing what is happening far from us when it closely concerns us.*

And yet the Malassis affair is decided. It was arranged on the 20th. Now, I am free ! ! ! *thanks to you.* I can sell my

* *Baudelaire wrote this letter on his return from a short journey to Paris and Honfleur, the principal object of which was to get out of the terrible situation in which he found himself with regard to Malassis.*

On the bankruptcy of the latter, Baudelaire owed him 5,000 francs, Malassis, in frightful difficulties, was obliged to sell the debt. Pincebourde, his successor, was willing to take it over, and even boasted of forcing Baudelaire to work for him. To escape this menace, the more intolerable since he hated Pincebourde, Baudelaire was forced to find some means of repaying Malassis at least partially.

The Letters *allow us to follow his efforts in this direction. Baudelaire arrived in Paris on the 4th July, and M. Ancelle on the 6th, left on the 7th for Honfleur, and the same evening, his mother, doubtless seeing him even more troubled than ordinary; this mother, who alas, was probably never able to understand him, but whose devotion and generosity it is only just to acknowledge—acts as his confessor and promises him, yet once again, to help him. "Thus in two minutes an affair was settled which had made me shudder every time I thought of it." (Letter to Poulet-Malassis, 8 July.)*

books to whoever I like and at what price I can get. On the same 20th July, M. Ancelle told me that he had just seen my friend, M. Julien Lemer, who told him that on the 20th or 21st he was definitely going to discuss my business, and that he hoped to conclude a good contract for me, but since the 20th there has been no news!

Sainte-Beauve, whom I saw on my second trip to Paris, told me he was interesting himself a little in the question.

When I returned to Paris from Honfleur, M. Julien Lemer, who had hoped to arrange things with Messrs. Garnier, told me that the head of the business had just left for Normandy to visit his property. These scoundrels buy castles with the money they earn through us.

(He was to return to Paris on Saturday, 15th. I arrived at Brussels on the 15th and since then have waited.)

I have an immense longing to write again to Sainte-Beuve and Lemer, but why torment people I am sure of?

If only I knew the reason for the delay!

Perhaps Lemer has failed, although he seemed so sure of himself? Perhaps they find 4,800 francs for a first edition of six volumes a little dear?

Perhaps Lemer has had to divide the six volumes among various publishers?

My impatience hinders me from working. That is the worst of it.

Give my sincere regards to my sister-in-law. I am enchanted to know she is with you and that you are looking after her.

My kind mama, I told you your complaint was unjust. But I always love your complaints, since they show me how much you love me.

Charles.

I am neither well nor ill. I am bored.

Friday, 20 *August,* 1865.

My dear mother, I am bored to an extent which you can-

not imagine, in this icy room (all white) and though generally I am frightened of your letters, because I am always afraid of finding sermons and reproaches in them (which I can do so well for myself), I always impatiently await *these same letters*. You could say the most disagreeable things to me, *and I should still find pleasure in them*. How are you? Does your garden still amuse you? It does me good to see your writing even. You know I am going to Paris on the 1st or 2nd of September. I have commissioned an agent to sell my books. To go back to Paris is, for me, to go back into hell, but I shall go.

I embrace you, and never a day passes but I dream of you.

Charles.

3rd September, 1865.

My good dear mother, what can I say but what you could so easily guess; that I am very bored, that I think how happy I should be with you, that I very often wonder how I can make amends for all I have to, and that I am terrified by the greatness of my task, etc.? And lastly, that I hope soon to go to Paris with a number of manuscripts, to raise some money on them, and so diminish to that extent my debt here, for I cannot endure the thought of devouring beforehand the hoped-for 4,000 francs, out of which anyway so much is already mortgaged. You can assume that finding myself in Paris, it would not be possible for me to resist my longing to go to Honfleur to embrace you.

If my sister-in-law is still with you, give her my love, and tell her I thank her for all the affection she can show you.

And now, what can I say to your last letter? It seems Mad. Ancelle was always most sensitive! Really? I shall never wholly believe it.

I must hasten and come back to you I know, so as not to increase my debt.

And for M. Ancelle to advise me to return without paying,

leaving *behind my manuscripts and books! ! ! He must be mad; utterly and absolutely mad.*

I love you, I love you very much. I am extremely sad, I need much strength. Pray to God for such strength for me. Perhaps that will aid me in finding it.

As for Lemer, he finally wrote on the 9th of August. He was to have settled everything with M. Garnier on the 12th, before the departure of the latter. Since then, no news. Has the affair fallen through? It is hardly possible, since they have already discussed it three times. Whether Garnier left before anything was concluded, and if he is still away, I do not know. Those who do not live in exile cannot imagine the nervous condition of someone who is nailed to one place, with no letters and no news.

I have just written to Sainte-Beuve, to ask if he was consulted.*

I am bored, and I embrace you. Are you well?

Charles.

Friday 3rd November, 1865.

My good dear mother, I have let too much time go by without writing to you, have I not? I was ashamed of it. You guessed rightly that if I did not write it was because I had nothing new to tell you. Doubtless you often accused me of neglecting you. Neglect, yes; forgetfulness, never. It is you who occupy my thoughts continually, throughout the day.

I think that this month my situation will better itself. And here is the latest news: I know I have often stormed against M. Julien Lemer, but I now think I was wrong to reproach him in any way. On the 15th of July, the day of my return to Brussels, Lemer, released from the Malassis affair, was to negotiate with the Garniers. He saw them three times. On August 12th Garnier (Hippolyte) left on his annual holiday before the contract could be made out. He should have re-

** See Letters 3 September, 1865, and for Sainte-Beuve's reply his correspondence, Vol. II, p. 23.*

turned to Paris on the 25th of October. He was in Brussels on the 23rd. I have learnt two very important things; the first that Hippolyte Garnier consulted Sainte-Beuve on the question, which proves he would like to conclude the matter; and the second, that the two brothers are divided about me; Auguste is against me. However, they say Hippolyte is the stronger and more intelligent.

I told you, I think, that in any case the book on Belgium will not be included in the sale. They are afraid of it.

I long so much to see you that I wanted to go to Paris and Honfleur, see to things in Paris, and then spend two days with you. But what is the good of spending two hundred francs in fares, when the matter is still pending? My journey would not advance things. So I am waiting.

Victor Hugo, who stayed for some time in Brussels, and who wants me to go and spend some time on his island, bored me and tired me very much. I would accept neither his fame nor his fortune, if with them I had to have his frightful absurdities. Madame Hugo is half an idiot, and her two sons are great fools. If you would like to read his last book (*Chansons des rues et des bois*), *I will send it you at once.* As usual, enormous success *as to sales,* but a disappointment to all intelligent people who had read it. He had meant this time to be light and joyous, in love and rejuvenated. It is horribly heavy. I only see in such things, as in so many others, another occasion for thanking God for not making me equally stupid. I repeat ceaselessly, the Pharisee's prayer.

What are you doing?

How are you?

Do not bear me a grudge, and answer me, my dear mother. How are your days filled, and what do you think of your health?

For the tenth time I tell you, *soon,* and I want you to believe it.

I think, too, of your garden, but above all of my room and

my papers. That cannot make you cross, I am sure. I embrace you with all my heart.

C. B.

Monday 13th November, 1865.

My dear little mother, I can only repeat what I have already told you.

From the 15th of July to the 12th of August, M. Julien Lemer had several talks with Messrs. Garnier about my five volumes. The sixth (*Belgium*) is excluded from the sale. On the 12th of August, M. Hippolyte Garnier (who is the manager of the selling department) left on his annual holiday. He returned to Paris on the 25th October. That is all the news I have. I only know, and it is an important indication, that M. Garnier consulted Sainte-Beuve, and also that M. Hippolyte wishes to draw up a contract, but that his brother Auguste is against me. *And if it does not come off?* you ask. Why not as well say that *no book* of mine will ever sell *again.*

Only, *I feel I have been forgotten.* I am sad. I am no longer good for anything. I am mortally bored. I think this arrangement will be concluded, but my great fear is that by then I shall owe *here* the 4,000 francs which the brothers Garnier will have to pay me, those 4,000 francs which I hoped to consecrate to paying my French debts.

Certainly, the book on *Belgium* is very advanced. Very little now remains to be done, but my complete privation of money prevents me from finishing it. I ought to devote my enforced leisure to perfecting as much as possible my *Poèmes en Prose* and *Mes Contemporains,* which would always be time gained; I shall certainly have to do so later, but I have no longer the heart to do anything. Two weeks ago, the editor of a Paris paper wrote saying that if I would send him a selection of such fragments, provided they were not of a nature to *annoy* his subscribers, he would at once send me 300 or 400 francs. Not only did I do nothing, but I have not even answered him.

In this state of somnolence, which is very like the *spleen*, I must yet make it my duty to write to you often. For I think that the difficulties of winter begin very painfully for you. The thought of distracting you may perhaps give me a courage I lack for my own interests.

You wanted the truth. I have given it you. Every day I see in bookshop windows here the journalistic futilities and impertinences which are printed in Paris, and I rage when I think of my six volumes, the fruit of so many years work, which if re-printed only once a year would give me quite a nice income. Ah, I can well say I have never been spoilt by destiny!

Lemer says always, *Patience!* He swears that he considers the arrangement *excellent* for the Garniers. *I do not doubt it.* I suspect he is proceeding very slowly in order not to appear anxious, and that since he refuses to take anything from me he wishes them to pay his commission; or *rather I do not understand at all.*

Be as well as you can. It is all I ask of you, and all I ask of heaven.

C. B.

Friday 22nd December, 1865.

My good, dear little mother, I should have answered you at once as you begged me, but I stupidly put it off for three or four days and then I was seized by neuralgia and a piercing rheumatism in the head, such as I had last year, but which is lasting longer, since the torture has gone on for *fourteen days.* It is true there are intervals, for I am writing to you, but I am never sure of even two hours relief. I have taken purges, and wrapped my head in linen soaked in sedatives. That relieved me momentarily, but the pain will not go. I am no longer master of my own time. It is at such moments I so deeply regret not having worked when I was well.

The word *income* was one to strike you, was it not? It is

not strictly true, and yet what I mean to say very much resembles an income. There are books which have a temporary vogue; there are others which always sell. My translation of Poe, the rights to which I ceded for 2,000 francs two years ago, brought in, one year with another, 500 or 600 francs. If, in the last nine years, I had really occupied myself with the *Fleurs du Mal,* they would have been reprinted *at least* nine times, if not more, and each time I should have had my royalties. Among the works which Lemer undertakes to sell, I think there are only three, which can hope for, if not an eternal sale, at least one of several editions; they are *Fleurs du Mal,* the *Spleen de Paris,* and *Paradis artificiels.* Criticism in general sells very slowly and is not often reprinted. Now you understand that when an author remains the master of his *property,* and has a certain number of works which sell easily, he possesses a kind of income. To make it clear in one word, supposing the law allowed the transference of literary property to go on for ever, and that Racine's heirs had, since his death, received his royalties on all editions of his tragedies, can you imagine the enormous sums they would have received, even supposing the royalties to be particularly small? To be the owner of one's own works (if a few of these works are of a nature to go on selling) is to be almost rich.

Some imbecile has had the stupid idea of coming to see me just now. After he had left my head started its galloping neuralgia again. I shall stop my letter. There are some pills for neuralgia composed, I believe of *quinine, codeine,* and morphia. The horror of opium I have had for so long has prevented me using it. But, in two or three days, if this goes on, I shall try them.

Saturday 23rd [December, 1865].

With regard to the *bad luck* I complain of (and for which I shall revenge myself if I can), I cannot, dear little mother, be of your opinion, in spite of all my deference to you. I

know my vices, my errors, my cowardice, as well as you. I willingly admit and even exaggerate my faults, yet, in spite of all, I still hold that Paris has never been just to me, that I have never been paid in esteem, any more than in money, WHAT IS MY DUE. And the best proof that there is a kind of curse hanging over me, is that my mother herself, on many occasions, has turned against me. In three months and a half I shall be 45. It is too late for me to be able to make even a small fortune, above all with my disagreeable, unpopular talent. Perhaps it is even too late for me to be able to pay my debts, and safeguard enough to support a free and honourable old age. But if ever I can recapture the sap and energy I have sometimes been capable of, I will vent my anger in terrifying books. I would like to raise the entire human race against me. That seems to me a pleasure which would console me for everything.

Meanwhile, my books lie *dormant*, "bonds" lost for the moment; and besides, I am forgotten.

One of my young friends, who came through Brussels from Paris, told me that he had met Julien Lemer coming from the Garniers, still affirming that my business would be arranged. He no longer speaks of 4,000 francs, but of 5,000 or 6,000 francs.

But what a mystery all this slowness is! Anyhow, I shall go myself to Paris, after the racket of New Year's Day, to find out about it all, and shall doubtless push on as far as Honfleur.

Julien Lemer sent word that he would much like to see the plan and fragments of the book on Belgium. At the moment Belgium is in fashion, owing to the death of the old fool of a king, and a host of small happenings. I suspect Lemer wants it for himself. But supposing the book entirely finished, 800 francs (which is all he can offer me) would not get me out of my difficulties, and for reasons which you will easily divine, I cannot let the book be printed and published as long as I am not *away from here*. So I shall again have to go back

to the Garnier affair, since he is so set on it. But six months lost! What a mystery!

Lastly, my dear mother, I am mortally bored and my only distraction is thinking of you. My thoughts are always directed towards you. I see you in your room, or in the drawing room, working, active, complaining and reproaching me from afar. And then I see all my childhood spent with you, and the rue Hautefeuille, and the rue Sainte-André-des-Arts; but then from time to time I wake from my reveries and think, with a kind of terror: "The important thing is to get into the habit of working, and to turn that disagreeable companion into my sole joy. For a time will come when I shall have no other." It tires you, I know, to write to me. You gave me to understand as much in your last letter. Write me a line from time to time to tell me you are well, but only, of course, if it is true, for above all, I want the truth.

I would very much like to have a photograph of you. It is an idea *which now obsesses me.* There is an excellent photographer in Havre. But I fear it is not possible at the moment. *I must be there.* You know *nothing about them,* and all photographers, even the best, have ridiculous mannerisms. They think it a good photograph if warts, wrinkles, and every defect and triviality of the face are made visible and exaggerated; and the HARDER the image is, the more they are pleased. Also, I want the face to measure at least one or two inches. It is only in Paris they succeed in doing what I want, that is, an exact portrait, but having the *softness* of a drawing. But in any case we will remember it, will we not?

Some time ago I got two trifles for you which will I hope, please you. The first time I have enough to pay for the packing and transport, I shall send them you. If they do not please you, tell me frankly, but accept the intention of a son who would be very happy to send you presents *every day,* and who would do anything in the world to be forgiven all

the griefs he has caused you. Write and tell me how you are.

This letter will leave this morning; you will have it on Sunday morning, if there is a Sunday delivery at Honfleur.

Charles.

27th December, 1865.

My dear little mother, here are the small nothings in question. The cruets for oil and vinegar and their stand will make you laugh. I believe it is old Rouen ware, but I am not sure. To tell truth, I think the china and colour rather mediocre. There is a slight defect (a splinter, a chip of enamel which has come off), which I have neglected to have mended, since I thought the object not worth the trouble, and did not know to whom to go.

As for the flower stands (they will hold water and flowers can be arranged in a fan or screen in them), they are, as you see, quite fine and very good Delft.

Perhaps all these will seem particularly pitiful. But you must take kindly my efforts to please you.

The carriage is paid.

How are you? Write me a little on this subject, but briefly, since writing tires you.

Charles.

I have just received your little letter. What an extraordinary idea to refuse my knick-knacks. It is most unkind, for I had had my eyes on those pots for months! As I feared Aimée's hammering and clumsiness, I had the case shut with screws instead of nails. So they must be unscrewed, and the planks not knocked off. As for the inside, she must take care. There must be lathes to hold the things in. The nails in the lathes must be very carefully pulled out.

The doctor has ordered me opium, digitalis, bella-donna and quinine.

I have managed to change the hours of the attacks. They

say that is great progress. Also the attacks are much less painful. But I am exhausted.

Let me know if the things arrive in good condition.

C. B.

The packer insisted on using *nails* instead of *screws. So take care!* There are no lathes, and I believe the packing was very carelessly done.

1st January, 1866.

My dear mama, I am much better. I hope that my tribute to the Belgian winter is paid. But as a result of the last fortnight's headache, I feel very heavy, and above all, find it difficult to concentrate.

Your letter, which you think consoling, disquiets me very very much.

Do remember that, as a result of not wishing to consult anyone for so long, you lately risked becoming seriously infirm. Is there no decent doctor in Honfleur, capable of advising you on your health? Your resignation hurts me. Even if age is the chief complaint of all, there must be some means of stimulating the legs and strengthening their weakness. I am convinced that we do not think enough about hygiene, that is to say, preventive medicine.

Whenever you have a few moments to yourself, write me a line or two. It always gives me so much pleasure.

Really, my dear mama, you must be very forgetful, or else I express myself very badly to you, for you not to know by now that three years ago I ceded *once and for all,* against the receipt of 2,000 francs, all the royalties on my five volumes of translations. I have told you that twenty times. It was extraordinarily stupid of me, but I absolutely had to find 1,100 francs at a moment's notice. The volumes in question were producing, one year and another, 500 or 600 francs.

The works which belong to me and which Lemer has undertaken to place (temporarily, that is, for a certain time, or for an edition of so many) are:

Les Fleurs du Mal.

Le Spleen de Paris (all but 1,200 francs, for I must repay Hetzel, who lent me that sum on these two books).

Les Paradis Artificiels.

Mes Contemporains (two volumes).

Belgique.

In all, five works, six volumes.

Lemer goes on saying, since last July, that he will sell these volumes for 800 per volume for an edition of 2,000 copies. The 2,000 copies sold, *fresh contract,* or else *liberty* for either author or publisher *to separate.* Total, 4,800 francs.

But WHEN?

I cannot stand it any longer. I shall go to Paris, at the end of January, to get to the bottom of this interminable mystery, and then I shall come and say how do you do.

Dear mama, I embrace you, and beg you to keep well.

C. B.

Friday 12th January, 1866.

My dear mother, I am writing you a few lines provisionally and in haste. I received your letter this very morning.

The letter from Ancelle was too serious for me to answer without due consideration! And also I must send him various documents he has not yet seen. He was actuated by the best of intentions, but he knew nothing of what had been done, or of the private habits of Messrs. Garnier.

I think I shall send off to-morrow evening the documents he will need to keep him informed. But really, his letter threw me into a state of great perplexity. Lemer, who is maybe only guilty of apathy, must not be insulted, nor think he is being thrust out of negotiations he himself began. The Garnier Ancelle saw was the *bad* Garnier, that is, the one whom his brother considers inferior, and to whom he leaves only the internal administration of the firm. Evidently both are equal partners.

I shall keep you informed as to everything. I think it

would be best for Ancelle to see Lemer, as I advised him, and tell him frankly about his visit to Messrs. Garnier; then, that I myself should go to Paris in February, to conclude matters. My choosing an intermediary was because I did not trust myself, for I thought that if the publisher wished to negotiate *personally with me,* it was because he secretly desired to find someone easy to deceive.

But tell me, soon, very soon, and as often as possible, of your health. That is much more important.

What you tell me of your memory and how it fatigues you to go down into the garden to open a door, disturbs and torments me.

Even when I seem neglectful, do not neglect me. There is no need to tell you that if I go to Paris I shall push on to Honfleur.

I love you and embrace you.

Charles.

What I am going to send to Ancelle is the *project for* BELGIQUE.

(As for L. Lemer, it is an occasion to see him.)

The note relating to five other volumes (for Messrs. Garnier).

The letters from Lemer and that from Sainte-Beuve, which will enlighten him as to what has been said and done up till now.

Tuesday 6th February, 1866.

My good, dear mother, although I think of you unceasingly, I might say every minute even, I hardly prove it to you. It is because it is so very difficult for me to write. You tell me wisely that it is always wrong to frighten one's friends. So I do not want you to be frightened. To begin with, *I do not suffer at all, at all,* except during the attack. But as I am not satisfied with my doctor, who seems very puzzled, I beg you to read this letter to your friend M. Lacroix,*

* *Mme. Aupick's doctor in Honfleur.*

if, that is, you are well enough to bother. Perhaps he will begin to laugh. My doctor himself did not take the thing very seriously until I had an attack under his very eyes. In any case, it is rather absurd to live on one's back, and unable to work. I am now an *oyster.* Perhaps M. Lacroix knows this kind of infirmity?

(My debts, my powerlessness to work, the "Conseil judiciaire," your health, the Garnier affair, all that is going round in my head, and my immobility makes it worse.)

And then, above all, yourself?

Your legs? Your spine and the turpentine?

Ancelle, as you know, rather thoughtlessly rushed to Messrs. Garnier, without providing himself with notes, documents, and knowing nothing of the customs of the firm. Scold him? It was impossible, since his intention was kind. I have commanded him to go to Lemer and get the documents (he only saw the bad Garnier) and then, I advise him by letter (how fatiguing). Lastly, one of my friends (French) has gone to Paris and will instruct him a little as to publishing.

I ask nothing better than to see your cousins, but when? Remember me affectionately to them.

I repeat that I do not suffer at all, but my impotence exasperates me. I feel *it is nothing,* although it is so disagreeable; if I could only walk a few miles, round Paris in the sun, I should be cured, I think. But when?

I love you very much. Write to me if you can, even a little.

Charles.

NOTE.

In February, 1865, neuralgia (?) or rheumatic shooting pains in the head (?), nothing to be done. Diet; there were respites and new attacks; 10 days.

In December, 1865, more neuralgia or rheumatism in the head (?), with respites and new attacks which lasted a

long time, a fortnight perhaps (pills made of quinine, digitalis, belladonna and morphia).

Is there any connection with this?

In January, and again now, before breakfast, suddenly without apparent cause, some vagueness, lack of concentration, stupor, and then atrocious pain in the head, giddiness. Even sitting, I fall down. Then follow cold sweats, vomiting of bile and white scum. Torpor lasting a fairly long time.

(Treatment: valerian, ether, Vichy water, Pullna water (purge).

Better during some days.

New attacks.

(Pills into the composition of which entered, I remember, Valerian, Oxide of Zinc, assafœtida, etc. So they were antispasmodic.)

Always the same lack of concentration, stupor, and heaviness in the head.

Great clumsiness, awkwardness, great weakness.

The doctor let fall the word hysteria; that is to say, I give it up.

Saturday morning 10*th February* [1866].

My dear mother, in spite of your precaution in not putting *hotel* on the envelope, the postman of my district having been changed, I was required to seek your letter at the head office. I only got it this morning, and thus you will not have my reply till to-morrow evening or Monday morning. (I must tell you, while I think of it, that by a new regulation, letters I receive from Paris are generally only stamped with 30 centimes instead of 40.)

You had a very bad night, *thanks to me.* So then I was very *much to blame in telling you of my infirmity,* and even my neuralgia. Think then of all the nervous trouble and headaches you have borne for so many years. Why is it so astonishing that I take after you a little, and that with

a bilious temperament, and exquisite sensitiveness, I should fall ill occasionally?

I do not want you to write to Ancelle. I do not want you to bother him. He knows I have been ill several times. He knows I have the greatest desire to return, and pay what I owe here. The woman who left Brussels on Friday (of last week), and who promised me she would convey certain advice, returns to-morrow. Doubtless she will bring back some news of the publishing.

I absolutely refuse your help. I do not want any more money from you. I refuse to send you from B. particulars of the amount I owe here. At the most, I might dare to accept some from you if my contracts were signed, because then I should have some possibility of paying you back. I have confidence in Ancelle, only he must be led. *I have a horrible fear of your imagination, and I do not want you to get thoroughly upset about it.*

Yes, the 50 francs will be useful. I only intend to pay the doctor when I leave, but I am often very humiliated when the under-manageress of the hotel has to pay for my medicines.

And now, to reassure you, I must tell you that for three days I have had no giddiness or sickness. It is true that I do not feel very solid. But the doctor says "Hysteria! hysteria! You must overcome it yourself; force yourself to walk." Walk, in this weather, in these awful streets and torn-up roads! It is impossible to saunter in Brussels. It is really *ridiculous,* but a man walking behind me, a passing child or dog, makes me want to faint. It is ridiculous, isn't it? Yesterday, I went to look at an exhibition of drawings. But in a few minutes, as when I have to apply my attention to anything (it cannot last for ever), I felt certain bad symptoms approaching, and, in spite of the rain, quickly took refuge in the open air.

You see that it is all purely nervous. The fine weather will chase it away. The only sensible thing (as I think)

the doctor said to me, was *"take cold showers and swim."* But in this cursed Brussels there is no river. It is true they have arranged artificial pools or baths, where the water is slightly warmed by some neighbouring mechanism, but the idea horrifies me. I do not want to bathe in an artificial lake soiled by all the filthy crowd. His advice is as difficult to follow as his advice to walk. I shall seek out a place for cold shower baths.

You do not write of your health. *It is more serious for me than my own, since you are weaker than myself. You must not write to Ancelle. Promise me.* The poor man has quite enough to do to clear up a business which is quite new to him. *You must not be angry with me at my refusal.* I am too ashamed of all the money I have extracted from you already.

I must tell you that this is the fifth time I think myself cured. If in a few days I find I do not relapse, I shall ask the doctor to prescribe a *permanent regimen.* As of myself, I had eliminated *wine, tea* and *coffee,* he said, "It is too severe. Anyway, food has nothing to do with it. Drink a little tea, and even a little wine." He always goes back to his "nervous affection" and to his anti-spasmodic drugs, and then, "Try and walk, in spite of your timidity." I will always answer your letters immediately.

I thank you and embrace you.

Charles.

I do not want to take to my bed, but I am afraid to work.

Monday 12th February, 1866.

I am frightfully sorry to have told you of the state of my health, I see now how much I have upset you. In the first place, I told you (which was true) that I was not in pain at all. I must tell you now that I only told you of my trouble when it was near its end. And so I can tell you that I again find pleasure in smoking (even tobacco itself disgusted me) and that yesterday I felt not only great disgust for all my pills, but also great hunger, and that has not happened to

me for three weeks now. The fear which caused me so much unhappiness grows less; often, during those interminable days spent in bed, I said to myself, "Now consider. If I am about to have apoplexy or paralysis, what shall I do, and how shall I put my affairs straight?" I must add something very curious: *when I thought of giddiness, I became giddy,* and then vomited. And the whole routine of illness began again. If I confessed that, I should be treated as a *malade imaginaire.* In fact, I must admit I do not in the least understand what has happened to me, but I should very much like some doctor who knows me well to prescribe a definite regimen. *For this is the fifth time I believe myself cured.* If I could only work for some few hours together without giddiness or falling, I should think myself cured. I will try this evening.

All that I have learnt is I must walk, take cold baths and give up coffee, brandy, tea and beer.

To go back to your letter, I refuse all help from you or Ancelle for the moment.

I do not like to see Ancelle involved in money matters (and, anyhow, it would be indiscreet on our part; it is quite enough to have imposed on him the care of concluding two contracts, and possibly six).

I will not accept money from you, or him, *until* a definite arrangement has been made with the publishers, and they have said they will only pay as and when the volumes are printed.

This brings me back to Garnier and Lemer. How credulous Ancelle is! and how credulous you are!

Lemer said to him "Baudelaire's five volumes represent an investment of 11,000 to 12,000 francs. They could give him 600 francs per volume for an edition of 1,500 copies per volume. In all 3,000 francs.

Lécrivain,* to whom I read M. Ancelle's letter, said im-

**Alphonse Lécrivain, formerly publisher in Paris, who had also suffered tribulations similar to those of Poulet-Malassis, aided him in Brussels in his pornographic publications.*

mediately, "Such very minute details imply that the matter is done with. These details are too trifling for there to be any truth in them. Lemer is lazy, and wants to hide his inertia from M. Ancelle, that is to say, he has given the reasoning of his own mind *as accomplished facts.*" Is that clear?

I expected M. Lécrivain yesterday. He had not even come back to-day. It is true he has his own affairs to see to.

Now, this is my conclusion:

Ancelle being well trained, and dealing alone with Messrs. Garnier, I shall ask through him for 15,000 francs for the exploitation of the five volumes for a period of five years, and if, as is probable, Messrs. Garnier refuse to pay out so large a sum as 15,000 francs to the author, I shall agree to 600 francs (per edition of 1,500 copies of each volume) payable on the publication of each new edition; which, at the end of five years, represents the same sum, 15,000 francs.

Only, in this case, I wish it to be understood that every year, Messrs. Garnier must have disposed of (successfully or not is not my business, that is for them to square as they like) 1,500 copies of each of the five volumes. It may be summed up thus: "An income of 3,000 francs during five years in exchange for the publication rights of five volumes for five years." It is true that in the case of the question being put thus, Messrs. Garnier will probably say, *"What about revolutions! and cholera! and depression in trade! Can we be sure, even supposing all M. Baudelaire's books to be excellent, of selling them regularly for five years?"* My reply is, "You are publishers. You must run risks. And, anyhow, I am agreeing to accept very small royalties, and if the sale of only one book exceeds 1,500 copies per annum, in five years, it will largely compensate you for your losses on the other books."

But you do not understand anything of all this, do you?

As to the *Belgique,* I must be quick and find a publisher. Events move quickly. A new electoral law is about to be

passed. Leopold I. is already forgotten. My manuscript will be old by the time Ancelle has finished.

You absolutely must tell me about your health, every time I write I ask you the same thing.

There is a man in Paris who might have been useful to me. I shall see him on my next visit. It is Charles Lassègue, my old professor in philosophy when I was a lad. He has given up philosophy. He has become a doctor, and a famous one. He specialises in *madmen* and *hysterics.*

Write to me and I embrace you.

Charles.

Friday 16th February, 1866.

My dear mother, now you have sent me more money; but why? I do not want any more. There still remained 20 francs of the 50 francs which I meant to spend on the cold showers. I am sure it would offend you if I returned your 100 francs, so I shall put them aside, and when I get a little money from France, I shall add it to the 100 francs so as to offer a fair amount to the manageress of the hotel and keep her patient until my affairs are arranged. M. Lécrivain has returned; he contends that *Lemer has done nothing, that the figures given by him to Ancelle are purely hypothetical and that Messrs. Garnier would not consent to make any final contract with either Lemer or M. Ancelle.* But when shall I be able to work, and when can I go to Paris?

No, I do not want your money. I already owe you quite 30,000 francs. Am I such a rogue or coward as to consent to gnaw at your pension?

No, neither do I want money from Ancelle. Firstly, *he would not pay anything, I am convinced. He would promise a series of "on accounts," and that would entail a host of humiliations.*

I would only accept such a service if he paid it all at once, and only after the signing of my contract.

I do not know why you demand an answer to your last letter but one. You must have received it on Tuesday, 13th.

All letters which leave Brussels in the evening arrive at Honfleur the evening after. All letters leaving in the early morning arrive at Honfleur the next morning.

Mad. Victor Hugo, who seemed to me only exceedingly ridiculous, has turned out to be a really good woman, although she rather likes to mother all her friends. She insisted on her doctor coming to see me. He approved of the treatment followed till now, but thinks that a diet containing a good deal of iron should be added, for he says, the predominance of bile and nerves proves *an impoverishment of the blood.* I should never have thought of that. It seems that some people in Paris have heard of my ridiculous infirmity. Sainte-Beuve consulted his doctor and sent me advice. Another of my friends has done the same. All these opinions more or less agree.

Lécrivain told me something very serious. He asserts that Messrs. Garnier, as he knows them, will want above all a contract stipulating my *relinquishing of the property.* Never will I do that. I remember the *Edgar Poe business.* I count on 600 francs for an edition of one volume, 3,000 francs for one edition of each of five volumes. They may perhaps offer me 4,000 francs for all publication rights during my life, and 30 years after my death. I would much rather wait for success, if it is to come, and draw small sums ten times or twenty times. I have no fortune and I do not wish to alienate my future rights.

If you imagine that what you wrote me about your somnolence, and frightful weakness in the stomach at evening is of a nature to reassure me, you are much mistaken. *I beg you to consult a doctor about it. Promise me that. I am sure that in spite of your age something can be done.*

I am going to try and obtain a few sums on account for the landlady of the hotel. When I am able to work for a few hours in succession I will tell you. And then I shall go to

Honfleur to find the manuscripts I lack, and I shall try to come to terms with Messrs. Garnier.

I embrace you very warmly, and thank you for all your many kindnesses.

Charles.

Saturday 17th February, 1866.

My dear mother, I had almost guessed all your sorry news about money, and had often wondered how you had managed to supply my so frequent demands. Give up the pleasure of your garden and send Aimée away, at your age! And you think I shall accept that! It would be frightful.

You have not understood what I said in reference to the possibility of the signed contract not carrying with it an immediate total payment. In that case, I said, I would say to Ancelle, *Borrow, get money where you will, pay my debt at once, and pay yourself back with the results of the contract.* That is not in any way your business. But alas, we are not at that point yet.

This much M. Lécrivain, as I wrote you yesterday, had guessed. Whether due to Lemer's laziness, or Garnier's remoteness, who will only discuss matters with the author himself, *nothing has been done,* and Lécrivain told me to advise Ancelle earnestly not to insist too much with Messrs. Garnier. It would give a bad impression. I will try and work a little, and then I shall go to Paris about the middle of March to take stock of all my affairs. In the meantime, Ancelle may perhaps have negotiated something for the *Belgique.* The chief thing for me now is to dig up some few sums on account with which to calm the manageress.

Lécrivain frightened me very much in speaking of the Garnier's tendency to buy what are called *literary property.* To alienate, for 3,000 or 4,000 francs down, literary stocks which might *with time* bring in ten times 600 francs, or ten times 800 francs, that I will never do.

Later, when my name has gone up in value, and I am

nearer death, since I have no heirs, I may perhaps make such a bargain, *which, in any case, will be much easier then.* But the time has not yet come. Unless they bring in immediately a sum large enough to invest and so increase one's income, it is a fool's bargain.

I learn from the papers that there has been a public lecture in Paris on my poetry, but nothing more.* My friends write me nothing of what concerns me.

I think you are mistaken about the pills (*sic*).

Those made of opium, valerian, digitalis and belladonna I took in December, *for neuralgia.* Are you suggesting that my frightful giddiness and vomiting in January were the result of this treatment? But, to start with, there was only the smallest amount of belladonna in the pills, and as for opium, you are well aware that I was in the habit of taking it for several years, even to the extent of 150 drops, without any danger.

The pills I have taken since, that is, for my *giddiness, followed by vomiting,* contain valerian, assafœtida, some sort of oxide of zinc, and I know not what else. They are purely anti-spasmodic.

On the whole, I shall keep to a summary of all the advice which has been given me: "Cold roast meat, in the morning; tea, containing no green tea, to drink."

"In the evening roast meat and a little wine."

"Cold showers and walks, *when possible.*" *It is rarely so here.*

No more coffee or brandy.

* *Deschanel's lecture. The* Temps *on the 17th February, gave an acount of it under the signature Henry de la Madeleine.*

"M. Deschanel came out of this very difficult attempt with honour. But, heavens, at what a price! Such concessions, such precautions! Such attenuations! M. Deschanel asked pardon for the stanzas he was going to read, yet each verse was so individual, so brilliant, so definitely stamped, that a murmur of admiration ran from seat to seat."

It is this article which is mentioned in the following letter.

But when I shall get back my activity of mind or joy in living I cannot tell. Your letter of to-day obliges me to ask you another question.

Yesterday, I begged you to consult someone and do something about the overwhelming weakness and pain in the stomach you have at evening.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

(*in pencil*) And your spine? And legs? *

21*st February*, 1866.

At last, my dear mother, you send me a letter which does me good. And now you are, you say, all at once relieved of everything which frightened you. That is marvellous. But you must write it me again and again, confirm it, and give me the details. Heavens, how I hope it will last!

As for me, *I am well*, except for odd attacks of fever, and a permanent background of neuralgia, as in December. I am weak, and stiff, timid and awkward. That is all.

Yes, I know the bad news.† I have just written to Ancelle to beg him not to undertake anything again, but be at peace; it was said in the most tactful way. He finds much too much time to write to you, and not nearly enough for me.

Messrs. Garnier sent him a letter which he has forwarded to me, and which is full of errors and stupidities. It is evident Lemer propounded the business in the most clumsy way. Lécrivain, to whom I showed Ancelle's letter and Messrs. Garnier's reply, and who had been certain of a successful issue, said: "It is possible Lemer has been deliberately clumsy, so that it shall fall through, in which case you would be forced *to ask him to become your publisher.*"

* *These last letters witness to the abnormal state of the author. Sometimes the pen trembles or hesitates; a word is forgotten, another repeated. People's names are wrongly spelt.*

† *There is a letter to Ancelle (February, 1866: "Your terrible letter has just come . . ." that in which Garnier's refusal is announced.*

That would be very shabby of him. Obviously, Ancelle cannot be tactful or clever in matters which are altogether new to him. I am in despair lest he should have rushed off to see Dentu as blunderingly as he did the Garniers. I must absolutely stop him. That would be another publisher *lost* to me, and very serious, since he would certainly tell Dentu of his *lack of success* with the Garniers, and repeat, as truth, all their false objections. Dentu would repeat them to others, and so on.

(I *implore* you, you understand; I beg you, I adjure you, do not write to Ancelle. You use up so much paper in conjectures about matters you do not understand.)

I am determined the works shall go through as a whole. Lemer was right when he said, "Do not separate *Les Fleurs* and *le Spleen de Paris* from the rest." It seems that Lemer often discussed with Lécrivain the commercial value of my books. Is it not strange? and is it not suspicious?

When I can I shall go to Paris. Yes, I know the story of Deschanel's ridiculous lecture.† The *Temps* reporter indicated as much charmingly and mockingly. But a letter from Ancelle was the best commentary. I think that excellent fellow is of the same opinion as Deschanel. Note particularly that most probably the very people who applauded my poems thought my book was monstrous and mad nine years ago.

They say (and I believe it now) that other nations are even more stupid than the French. Well then, I must return and live in France, in spite of the stupidity of the country, or go off to the next world.

I propose to thank M. Deschanel when I see him. I wager he will never see I am poking fun at him.

I embrace you, and beg you never to go long without writing of yourself.

Charles.

* *See the note on the preceding letter.*

Monday 26th February, 1866.

My dear mother, I understand nothing or practically nothing of your letter. And to not understand, or be not understood, is equally humiliating. *What are the articles of which you speak?* To start with, there is no article by Deschanels. Deschanels, a professor of whom all the women and young girls are enamoured (you can imagine the man), gave a *public lecture* on my poems, in Paris. I got my information through the report in the *Temps,* signed Henry de la Madelene, who very amusingly reproaches him for so very gingerly presenting such a *scoundrel* to the public. As I know Deschanels, I guessed what his lecture was like. Also, by Ancelle's remarks, who knows as much about literature as an elephant about dancing the bolero, which confirmed my original opinion. I know nothing more. I did not tell you I should poke fun at Deschanels, but simply that I should *thank* him, which as fun seems to me quite enough. And I added that he would take my thanks seriously.

Another error, and on the part of a mother a very serious one. Your son is not 46. And he will not even be 45 for a month and a few days.*

For some time now the landlady of the hotel has been making quite intolerable scenes, but I shall put up with them. They no longer present me with my bills. But I can calculate the total approximately. In February, 1865 (therefore a year ago), I owed 1,000 francs. During the year 1865 I paid them 1,600 francs. So it is as though I had only given them 600 francs in the past year. I must allow roughly (at the very least) about 200 francs a month.

Yes, I wanted to stop Ancelle. His petulance and zeal frighten me. Although Paris is not a village, each profession

* *Mme. Aupick in an unpublished letter to Charles Asselineau, wrote that her son was born on the 7th April, 1821 (and not on the 21st as Théophile Gautier said in the fine biography which served as preface to the Œuvres Complètes (edit. Lévy) or the 9th as stated by the poet's birth certificate.*

is a kind of village where everything is repeated. Therefore, a series of failures with various publishers would be most disastrous for me. I do not in the least doubt Ancelle's friendship, but I think he might easily make mischief by being over-zealous. I begged him to do one thing only; unravel the Lemer-Garnier mystery, and far from succeeding, he has brought about disaster (but I repeat, do not write to him on the subject, *it would be too unkind*). It is a mystery which must remain unexplained. H. Garnier had consulted Sainte-Beuve, *which betrays his anxiety,* and H. Garnier had *frequently manifested a wish to take my books.* Auguste Garnier, who doubtless is rich enough already, hates his brother's adventurousness. Messrs. Garnier, in their letter, gave the most absurd reasons for refusing the books, and refer to things which have never existed. Either Lemer has been unpardonably clumsy, or he presented the matter in such a way as to ensure its failure, so that he might get the books himself; and, finally Ancelle's impatience must have furnished A. Garnier with an excuse for overriding his brother Hippolyte.

Ancelle has so far had no reply from Dentu with regard to the *Belgique.*

I hope to go to Paris on the 15th of March, and I shall try to come and embrace you. That would do me good.

As for my health, I really will promise anything you like, as I sincerely hope I shall never have to be carried away as an invalid. As for my renewed attacks of rheumatism and neuralgia, my stiffness, is that so very astonishing in such a damp climate, where the people love damp so much that even when it pours in buckets, they wash their houses not only inside, but also outside.

I embrace you tenderly, and beg you not to worry.

Charles.

Monday 5th March, 1866.

My dear mother, as I know that the least trifle which

concerns me amuses you, I send you this article,* in three numbers (there are only two here, I did not receive the first), which appeared some time ago.

There is talent among the younger men, but how much folly, and what exaggeration and youthful fatuity. For some years I have surprised, here and there, imitations and tendencies which alarmed me. I know nothing more compromising than imitators, and I love nothing so well as being alone. But that is not possible, and it seems that there is now a *school of Baudelaire.*

You write very exaggeratedly, my dear mother, and your reproaches for my imprudence do not console me. I have been duped, the dupe of Belgium and then of Lemer. I have been deprived of you for two years longer than I thought, after having been without you so long already. Now I must extricate myself from my difficulties alone, and repair the damage. You might leave me to my fate without adding your reproaches.

All the same, I would rather have your reproaches than nothing at all. For your silence is always of all things the most alarming to me. Since you say nothing of your health, it is because you are well, *is it not?*

I shall work hard for a fortnight on my *Spleen de Paris,* and a few other small things. When all is finished (except *Belgique*), I shall go to Paris to try my fortune myself. Obviously I shall have to return to Brussels; but if I succeed in selling my work in Paris, I shall come back merely for a few days. For I must see to certain things here, settle my accounts and fetch my luggage.

Do you believe then that it makes me happy to live in a place peopled only with fools and enemies, and in which I have seen so many French fall ill like myself, and where, I think, the spirit dries up like the body, *not to mention the*

* *Enthusiastic article by Verlaine which appeared in* L'Art *for 16th and 20th November, and 23rd December, 1865.*

fact that I am being forgotten, and that I am breaking, without wishing to, *all my ties with France.*

To settle in Honfleur has always been my most cherished dream.

I hear that Sainte-Beuve has been very ill. He writes that he is better. Did he not—as an old medico—in spite of everybody's advice, in spite of the increased danger due to his age, insist on undergoing a most painful operation, which, however, proved successful.*

For some days I have stopped wine in the morning for cold meat and tea in the English fashion. The great advantage is that I can set to work at once and go on for a long time. But the slight intoxication of the tea causes some congestion, almost like what one feels in the head when eating an ice. But nowadays I am intensely afraid of pains in the head. M. Lécrivain (who has been to see Lemer and is now back) has just had a new attack of neuralgia, biliousness, and cold sweats. And he, who is a very colossus of strength, is in a much worse state than I was.

I embrace you.

C. B.

I have had no word from Ancelle for some time now. If I have offended him, *it is not through lack of precaution.* I will see him in Paris.

Tuesday, 20 March.†

My dear mother, I am neither well nor ill. I work and write with difficulty, I will explain why. For I have been meaning to write to you for some time now, and I think that this evening or to-morrow morning I shall answer all your questions. *I am forced to put off my journey to Paris.* But I shall go, for it is absolutely necessary. But from now

* *What Baudelaire does not say here is that he had been much moved by this news, he had so much affection for "l'oncle Beuve." Witness his letter to Troubat, 5 March, 1866.*

† *This letter is the last of the correspondence written in his own hand.*

on, I will not remain so long without writing to you.

Poor dear little mother, it is I who am the cause of your having been so *"unquiet!"* (*with only one t*). Spelling has changed so often in France that anyway you can well allow yourself a few mannerisms, like Napoleon and Lamartine.

If you do not receive the two letters together, you will get the second the day after this.

I embrace you.

Charles.

If you want to read *Travailleurs de la Mer* * I will send you the volumes in a few days.

Brussels, Friday 23rd March, 1866.

My dear mother, for a long time, a very long time, I have had no news from M. A. . . . I had intended putting off my journey to Paris until I had finished certain work, and received something for the hotel; but for three days, since my last letter, I have had a fresh attack, and here I am, helpless.

Write, if you can to M. A. . . . and ask him to send some money—what he will or can, to Madame Lepage, proprietress of the hotel, *at once;* and above all underline in your letter that there must be no *indiscretion, or excess of zeal,* on his part.

The doctor, who is so kind as to write at my dictation, advises you not to take this too much to heart, and says that in a few days I shall be ready to take up work again.

I embrace you.

Your son,

Charles.

Monday 26th March, 1866.†

My dear mother, since you insist on my answering you

* *Baudelaire doubtless planned writing a critical article on this book for a note under this title was found among his papers.*

† *This letter and the two preceding it are written in a strange hand. The last but one is full of spelling mistakes corrected in pencil. These three letters are in three distinctly different hands.*

at once, you must know that even to write my name crookedly is a great mental effort for me. I do not think that M. A. . . . will send the thousand francs to Madame L.

I do not want him to come and fetch me.

Two days before my attack a friend in Paris offered me a sum of money on behalf of my friends, in case I felt ill and wished to return suddenly to France. I answered no, thinking I should go there myself. All my friends and doctors think that for six months I must abandon all literary effort and lead a country life.

M. Leon Marcq, 10 Place de l'Industrie.

How are you?

I embrace you.

Charles.

Brussels, Friday 30th March, 1866.

My dear mother, the reply sent on Monday you received on Tuesday evening. Wednesday, Thursday and to-day, Friday, you might have sent me news of yourself, so that your not having done so is because you think I am only concerned about myself.

You absolutely must give me news of yourself.

I received a letter from A. . . . who says he will come soon. It is useless, or at least premature.

1st Because I am not able to move.

2nd Because I am in debt.

3rd Because I have six towns to visit, let us say fifteen days. I will not lose the fruit of so much work.

I feel that he has chiefly at heart the wish to please and obey you; that is why I write to you about it; otherwise I am ready to return as soon as possible.

Write to me of yourself, at length and in detail.

I embrace you with all my heart.

Charles.

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